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MOVIELAND CLASSICS, LLC MAGAZINE



MONSTERS

#274 JULY 2014

GODZILLA

SIX DECADES OF
DOMINATION!

FM Feature

GARETH EDWARDS

ON DIRECTING THE KING OF MONSTERS

FM Exclusives

RICK BAKER MAKES

MALEFICENT

MAX BROOKS LEADS THE

EXTINCTION PARADE



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THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO A LIVING LEGEND
WHO HAD THE DISTINCTION OF BEING CALLED

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HARUO NAKAJIMA

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OPENING WOUNDS

Has it really been 60 years since Godzilla was loosed upon the world? I remember when the Big G turned 25 in 1979. I grew up with Godzilla. We drew pictures, created new monsters, and played with his toys (or made our own from dinosaur figures). As some of us got older and remained fans, we organized. We started fan clubs, newsletters, fanzines; we hosted screenings. Long before the internet we kept in contact through letters, fanzines, and phone calls. I was lucky to be retained as the Godzilla Expert for our local horror host, Bob Wilkins, who had me talk about these films and television series on "Creature Features" and "Captain Cosmic".

Still, even though Godzilla was popular, he was looked down upon by many people—whether it was by those who still had a grudge against Japan, or science fiction fans who saw the films as subpar. But the fandom did not fade away—it has gotten stronger through cable and home video, the web, and social networks. New comic books have been created and have a rabid following. Godzilla has been embraced by those who—unscathed by the Roland Emmerich debacle—just love monster movies and fantastic cinema. The reception by the general public to my book *Eiji Tsuburaya: Master of Monsters* has been phenomenal. Gareth Edwards' mega-budget Hollywood *GODZILLA* spectacle will be in theaters as you read this. The Big G, kith and kin, have finally become "cool" (but we knew that already).

The proof of this is in your hands: *Famous Monsters'* annual "kaiju issue" has become monstrously popular because of the passion of all those involved in putting it together for you since FM #256 in 2011. We thank you for your enthusiastic support of our efforts. After all, not only is Godzilla the first and greatest true *kaiju* to ever grace a motion picture screen, he is the one and true King of the Monsters. Long live the king!

Now, make like Baragon and dig in!

August Ragone
Contributing Editor
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ENTER THE DRAGON

RICK BAKER BRINGS DISNEY'S MALEFICENT TO LIFE

BY ED BLAIR

W

hile *SLEEPING BEAUTY* is one of the most celebrated of all Disney animated films, it is the character of Maleficent—the evil being who casts Princess Aurora into her un-waking slumber—who has captivated audiences for over 50 years. When Angelina Jolie was chosen to play Maleficent in Disney's latest live-action adaptation, there was only one person she wanted to re-interpret the character for a new generation: seven-time Oscar winner and legendary Monster Maker Rick Baker, who took some time to chat with us about Disney's notorious bad girl.

Famous Monsters. So often the projects you undertake are ones that allow you to create your own creatures from original designs. What was it about *MALEFICENT* that made you want to put your own spin on one of Disney's most iconic characters? **Rick Baker.** It wasn't so much my spin. If it was totally left up to me, I would have done a realistic version of the cartoon. But this film is a different film. The main reason that I took this on was because Angie [Angelina Jolie, who plays Maleficent] requested me. I was just finishing up *MEN IN BLACK 3* and taking some time off, and I heard she wanted me to do the film. So I met with her, and she was kind of hard to say no to, sitting there. I first read the script and then did a drawing as to what I thought it should be, which really wasn't doing much of anything on Angie's face. I thought if we just gave her the horns and—there's a story point about her having pointy ears, so I put the ears in there, too. Plus, a very smooth face like hers is sometimes hard to put appliances on and have the edges blend. But Angie had other thoughts. Her feelings

were that Maleficent was a creature, and she wanted to be a creature and not just herself. She had very specific ideas. So my job was to try and make her ideas work.

FM. It's not common that actors want to put anything on their face. In fact, many costumed actors go to great lengths to find excuses to keep their faces uncovered.

RB. Yeah, and it's usually pretty people that don't want to be covered up. But she really embraced it. It was a scary proposition, because she's very beautiful and has such delicate skin that I didn't want to be the one responsible for messing up her face. [Laughs]

FM. When we've talked before, you've said that some actors are terrified of makeup, that it's fragile and they don't want to move for fear of it falling off. It sounds like she didn't have that issue.

RB. She embraced it. She wanted it, so she had fun.

FM. With a character as well-known as

Maleficent, where did you feel you could stray from the original design?

RB. That's always a hard thing, isn't it? Everyone has an opinion, and you can't please them all. I really would have liked to have gone much more classical. But Angie had some very specific thoughts. Where I focused a lot, since it's a big part of the story, was on Maleficent's horns. I know from making horns in other films that they're not the easiest things to wear. I wanted to make them extremely lightweight and removable so that she wasn't walking around the set between hours of setups with those horns on. I wanted her to be as comfortable as possible, but I also didn't want her to break them. When you have these lightweight horns, and they're fragile, people aren't used to having things extending about a foot coming off of their head. So it's not uncommon that when they walk through a doorway, they hit the horns. We spent a lot of time on the shape. The first thing I did was a Photoshop painting of what I thought they should be. Then I did some ZBrush sculptures, trying out different horn shapes.



LEFT: Angelina Jolie dons the horns as she transforms into Maleficent.

BELOW: Disney's original Maleficent from the animated classic *SLEEPING BEAUTY*.

BOTTOM: Monster Maker Rick Baker receives his long overdue star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2013.



Then we went to clay and did about four different versions off of a life cast of Angie, one being very much like the animated version of the horns. Then Angie chose the one that she liked, and that's what we went with. A lot of the work went into the horns.

FM. There was obviously some work on her cheeks, but what else is happening on her face? It's so seamless in the film that it's hard to tell where the appliance ends and she begins.

RB. I was impressed by that as well. That kind of skin is hard to hide those things on. If you're doing an old age makeup and there's a creakle on an edge, it kind of blends in on everything. But with her skin it's very difficult to hide. We have cheekbones on her, a nose bridge, ears—although most of the pictures you've seen

are the version of Maleficent after she's evil, and you can't see the ears. We pretty much did cheekbones, ears, and nose. We experimented with a number of cheekbones and ears, a forehead piece, and a chin. But in the end, I was trying to be Angie's bands, and I tried to make it work. And, of course, she had contact lenses.

FM. How long did it take to get to where both you and she were happy?

RB. That's the tough thing, isn't it? Angie's very busy, and I kept saying, "We need tests! We need tests!" And they kept saying that I could only get her for a few hours at a time. So when the execs find out that she's going to be at my studio, they show up and the writer shows up and the director shows up and it turns out that our two-hour makeup test becomes ten minutes. The first time we only got one cheek piece on her. So I requested a second test for about four hours when I could get her alone. Cut to a shop full of people. We got a little bit further, and then they announced they were holding casting sessions at the shop. So we never really had a valid fitting before the crew went off to England for production. There wasn't something I signed off on and that she signed off on as a final makeup. But the one thing that made me confident was that the people who would be applying the makeup on set—Arjen [Tuiten, *PAN'S LABYRINTH*, *HELLBOY II: THE GOLDEN ARMY*] and Toni G. [Jolie's makeup artist]—meant she was in good hands, and I had nothing to fear. But it wasn't until really close to the first day of filming that we saw what the full makeup was going to look like.

FM. It sounds like her involvement was very key in bringing the character to life. It has to be nice to have that kind of support, especially from the makeup side of things.

RB. You know, they really wanted her to do this part, so she ended up having a lot of input on the film. And one of the first things she did was say, "I want Rick Baker." There was, at the beginning of this whole process, a meeting in Joe Roth's [former Disney Studios chairman, founder Revolutions Studios and Roth Films] office. Someone said, "I heard he's retired." And she replied that she had just seen me win an Oscar for *THE WOLFMAN* (2010) and that I didn't seem retired. And that was how it all came about. What I really liked about her was that she



had very specific ideas. I was dealing with somebody who would tell me what she liked and what she didn't like instantly. So many times today, someone will say, "Do another one," and not give any input as to why. Angie, she was very specific.

FM. Aside from physical features, color is a very important part of Maleficent's look. The purple is very striking.

RB. Yeah, that was actually one of the first things she said to me—she didn't want green skin and purple eye shadow. Even

though she felt her character was more creature than human, she still wanted to be human-colored. No green skin. But she wanted the contacts. At first I had the thought that with contacts, you sometimes lose a certain life. She had initially wanted to have contacts with eyes like a goat—horizontal pupils. And I was afraid that it would make her too creepy looking, which I can't believe I'm actually saying [laughs]. In the end, they kept the same color we had for the contacts, but lost the elongated pupils.

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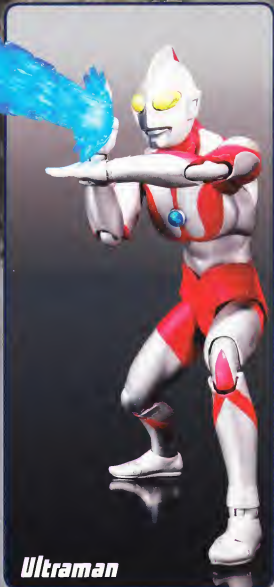
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Once available only in Japan, S.H. Figuarts is now releasing their highly sought after Ultra Act Ultraman figure, featuring a bevy of effects, interchangeable hands, and the ability to pose him in all of his trademark stances. And if that wasn't enough, S.H. MonsterArts is unleashing three of Godzilla's greatest co-stars in their new, ultra-detailed line: Gigan, Battra, and the immortal Mothra! All three feature a great many points of articulation and accessories, and are accurate down to the smallest detail.



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THE COMPLETE GODZILLA CHRONOLOGY: 1954-2004

Godzilla has been one of the most famous monsters. It all started over half a century ago, from a movie called *Godzilla*. The Big G, and the horde of other Japanese monsters that followed in its wake, introduced a modern, benevolent, and unified Japan to Western moviegoers. Many fans who grew up during the 1950s through the 1970s, in turn, were inspired to become filmmakers, artists, and writers themselves—with a larger appreciation of Japan as a whole. In this regard, Godzilla could be looked upon as a proxy Cultural Ambassador to its former adversaries after the end of the Pacific War—eventually being absorbed into the tapestry of American pop culture, as Dr. Pepper and Snickers commercials can attest.

While the original series of fifteen Godzilla films were produced from 1954 through 1975, and a revival in 1984 kick-started another two-decade cycle of thirteen, the King of the Monsters franchise has solely remained a Japanese franchise. In spite of several Hollywood attempts (Steve Miner's proposed "Godzilla, King of the Monsters! 3D" and misfires Hanna-Barbera Productions' 1978 cartoon series, Roland Emmerich's 1998 debacle), Godzilla has failed to make the transition from Japanese to American Cinema. Why? Perhaps, I believe, the attraction to these films—beyond the visceral monster action—is that they are, themselves, *Japanese*. In essence, it's their own "Japaneseness" that makes Godzilla films tick. So, if filmmakers take the Japanese spirit out of Godzilla, the monster ceases to be Godzilla. Will the Gareth Edwards production of Legendary Pictures/Warner Bros' GODZILLA abandon the western penchant for hubris, stay true to the spirit of the original film created by Ishiro Honda and Eiji Tsuburaya, and finally break the "American Curse"? By the time you read this, we will all know for sure—and the future of the Big G will be decided by the film's box office.

However, whether this new Godzilla sinks or swims, the original films will always exist and find new generations of fans. Because

releases of all the revivals, remakes, and home video picture technology in the last 60 years, the Godzilla films that have left the biggest and most memorable impact on our collective consciousness (both in Japan and the West) are those produced by the Toho Motion Picture Company. Looking back, we can see the strength upon which the original films of the 1950s and 1960s were made and how they have now fallen into the category of timeless classics. The same can be said of the revival of the Heisei Era (named after the reign of Emperor Akihiko) and the Millennium Era (the post-1998 films)—while newer, more cutting-edge Godzilla films will certainly be produced in the future, the original Japanese films will always exist as the foundation.

The undeniable greatness of the original cycle of films and everything that came after rests squarely on the shoulders of the dedicated filmmakers and actors who made them, represented by producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, director Ishiro Honda, screenwriter Shinichi Sekizawa, composer Akira Ifukube, visual effects wizard Eiji Tsuburaya, and the man in the grey rubber suit: Haruo Nakajima (who brought the monster to life in twelve of the fifteen original films). These men will never be matched for their combined efforts in creating some of the most memorable and beloved *kaiju eiga* of all time. No matter what the future brings, Godzilla will always be the undisputed King of the Monsters!

—August Ragone

Back in print! August Ragone's *EIJI TSUBURAYA: MASTER OF MONSTERS* from Chronicle Books.



1954: GODZILLA

"A blinding flash of fire engulfs all..." is the last message of a doomed ship that has wandered into the waters where a giant, atomic-mutated nightmare has risen to exact its revenge against mankind. It has been said so often, but bears repeating: Ishiro Honda's **GODZILLA** is a singular masterpiece of Atomic Era Sci-Fi of the 1950s, but has also become one of the true classics of international cinema. Not only did the film take the world by storm—from Hong Kong to Hungary—but it also launched two distinct sub genres: *Tokusatsu Eiga* (Special Visual Effects Films) and *Kaiju Eiga* (Japanese Monster Movies). And while there were elaborate miniature-filled fantasy productions before 1954, **GODZILLA** was the roar that was heard around the world.

Popular legend has it that a young Japanese movie producer, Tomoyuki Tanaka, dreamt up **Godzilla** on a flight back from his failure to close a large-scale co-production deal with Indonesia. Looking out over the water, he imagined a colossal beast rising from the sea and destroying Tokyo on a violent rampage—inspired by the American box office success of Warner Brother's **THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS** (1953), which hadn't been released in Japan, but Tanaka had read about in trades. Also on Tanaka's mind was the recent international incident between his country and the US, which the Japanese press labeled "The Second Atomic Bombing of Mankind". On March 1, 1954, the fishing trawler *Dai-go Fukuryu Maru* (Lucky Dragon No. 5) sailed into the fallout from US hydrogen bomb tests in the Marshall Islands. After the ship returned to port, it was determined that all twenty-three crewmen and their haul of tuna—which had already been off-loaded and distributed—were heavily contaminated by the radioactive ash. When the news broke, it caused a national panic.

Upon returning to Tokyo, Tanaka pitched "Giant Monster From

20,000 Miles Under the Sea" to Toho Studios' production head, Iwao Mori, who strived to make Toho the biggest and best studio in Asia. Mori was a staunch champion of developing special visual effects, and was confident that the studio's master of trick photography, Eiji Tsuburaya, would be up to the challenge of realizing the elaborate and massive production.

Originally, action director Senkichi Taniguchi was assigned to the project, but because of his success with the visual effects-heavy war film **EAGLE OF THE PACIFIC** (1953), director Ishiro Honda was given the reigns to helm **GODZILLA**. Feeling that a treatment by fiction writer Shigeru Kayama was too melodramatic, Honda took on the task of adapting Kayama's treatment into a screenplay, along with writer-director Takeo Murata. They decided to approach the narrative as if this outrageous premise could happen in the real world. They also wanted the story to reverberate with current geo-political, national, and social concerns, as well as evoke the spectre of war and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The young leads were played by newcomer Akira Takarada and up-and-coming actors Akihiko Hirata and Momoko Kōchi. The great Takashi Shimura, a favorite actor of Akira Kurosawa, was tapped by Honda to play the role of the wizened paleontologist Dr. Yamane—effectively playing much older than his 49 years and adding a solid foundation to the narrative and production. Likewise, a new and rebellious composer, Akira Ifukube, who had scored Kurosawa's **THE QUIET DUEL** (1949), was advised by his contemporaries not to accept the job, and refused to listen. Considered one of Japan's greatest classic film composers, Ifukube provided the memorably thunderous, haunting, and unique score—as well as the voice for the monster, created by rubbing a contrabass string with a resin-coated glove.

The **WAR** Between the **HORRORS**
of **Godzilla** and the Incredible
WEAPONS of Science!



While many of the production details are well documented, the origin of Godzilla's name is still shrouded in mystery. Though this has never been verified, the story goes that fellow producer Ichiro Sato told Tanaka of an employee in the advertising department, Shiro Amikura, whose physical prowess was akin to that of a gorilla and that his presence was that of a whale (*kajira*), so the man's nickname became "Gojira" (a combination of both animals). However, Ishiro Honda's widow Kimi, who worked at Toho when she met her future husband, denies this story, calling it a "tall tale". Although even the prestigious NHK network investigated the story in the early 2000s, the facts and details were non-conclusive. Regardless of origin, for lack of a better name, the production was officially titled "Gojira" (transliterated into English as "Godzilla").

Tsuburaya originally wanted to bring the nuclear nightmare to life using stop motion effects, as Ernest B. Schoedsack's *KING KONG* had been made. When asked how long it would take to produce such effects, Tsuburaya told Mori it would take seven years to shoot all of the effects required by the screenplay. Tsuburaya decided that his department's considerable expertise in miniature building and visual effects photography could accommodate working with a live actor in a monster costume instead of stop-motion.

The monster would still be "animated", but rather by young character actor and stuntman Haruo Nakajima (*EAGLE OVER THE PACIFIC*), with Katsumi Tezuka as a relief pitcher, in a prosthetic suit crafted by Teizo Toshimitsu and his crew. Despite the torture and pain of working with such a heavy monster suit (weighing approximately 220 pounds), Nakajima would become forever associated with Godzilla by becoming Tsuburaya's mon-star, playing Godzilla through 1972, along with almost every monster from Rodan to the Green Gargantua, over the next 18 years. For the destruction scenes, Tsuburaya supervised meticulously constructed miniature sets of whole districts of Tokyo in 1/25 scale. These two hallmarks soon became a tradition of *kaiju eiga* and remain its most irremovable elements.

GODZILLA would prove to be one of the most expensive films shot by Toho to date, and was a considerable financial risk for the studio—the film's final cost was over 100 million yen (approximately 1.5 million 1954 US dollars). Unleashed on November 3, 1954, GODZILLA sold 9.6 million tickets in its first run. Tsuburaya's visual effects stunned audiences at the time, won awards, and even impressed *Variety* magazine. Not since *KING KONG* had a giant movie monster captured the imaginations of audiences. Like Kong, some saw Godzilla as sympathetic; not only was he a result of man's tampering with nature, but also a victim of that tampering. Godzilla has gone on to appear in 30 films over the last 60 years and has become a permanent fixture in pop culture the world over.

—August Ragone

GODZILLA

Gojira, 1954, 97 minutes

Director ISHIRO HONDA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Original Story SHIGERU KAYAMA Screenplay TAKEO MURATA and ISHIRO HONDA Cinematography MASAO TAMAI Music AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects Director EIJI TSUBURAYA
AKIRA TAKARADA (Hideto Ogata) AKIHICO HIRATA (Dr. Daisuke Serizawa) MOMOKO KOCHI (Emiko Yamane) SACHIO SAKAI (Reporter Hagiiwara) TOYOAKI SUZUKI (Shinkichi) KOKUTEN KODO (Old Fisherman) and TAKASHI SHIMURA (Dr. Kyoshi Yamane)



1956: GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS

In 1955, a group of film brokers and investors purchased the international rights to the original GODZILLA, but foresaw a problem with Occidental moviegoers being able to accept an all-Japanese-cast film. They chose to include new footage, directed by veteran film editor Terry Morse (FOG ISLAND), featuring a newspaper reporter who would tell the story in flashback. Raymond Burr, who had just appeared in Alfred Hitchcock's REAR WINDOW, was tapped to play the main character, "Steve Martin" (this was long before public heard of the comedian of the same name), and with little to go with, the actor turned in a solid and somber performance—reportedly shot in five days. In order to accommodate the new footage, the picture was extensively cut, rendering all the characters (save for Dr. Serizawa) less dimensional than in the original. Despite the seemingly rushed nature of Morse's inserts (and the toning down of the atomic and apocalyptic themes), the film manages to maintain a gritty, moody feel that lends this adaptation a life all its own. In fact, Toho was well aware of, and involved in, all of the steps in making the US version. Fortunately, Morse's adaptation was well done, unlike the amateurish butcher jobs that would kill films like GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN (1955) and KING KONG VS. GODZILLA (1962). The film went on to huge international box-office success—which is why, 60 years after GODZILLA was released in Japan, we are celebrating the monster's legacy today.

—August Ragone



1955: GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN

While Godzilla was utterly destroyed by Dr. Serizawa's "Oxygen Destroyer"—a chemical substance that removes all oxygen in water—Dr. Yamane warned, "If they continue to experiment with nuclear weapons, there may one day appear another Godzilla in the world." GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN appeared within five months. In the first of Toho's "Monster vs. Monster" epics, this production explains that the titular beast is a different creature of the same species, not a reincarnation of the original monster—and now pitted against the violent, spike-laden quadruped Angirus (aka "Angilas"). Haruo Nakajima returned to play Godzilla, with his co-suit actor Katsumi Tezuka playing Angirus.

Unfortunately, the plot structure of GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN is odd, as the monsters are introduced—and battle to the death—in the picture's first half, while the remainder of the running time centers on the military's efforts to locate and dispose of Godzilla. More than anything, and certainly more than its predecessor, the picture is essentially a melodrama, and a rather awkward and slow one at that. The picture's main characters, played by Hiroshi Koizumi (a favorite of Yasujiro Ozu) and Minoru Chiaki (Heihachi from SEVEN SAMURAI), seem unimportant, barely sketched out, while the film's subplots are too mawkish for this type of picture, resembling the standard low-budget American B-films of the 1950s rather than the major release it portended to be. Most of this could be leveled on the director, Motoyoshi Oda, who only had one other fantasy film to his credit (INVISIBLE AVENGER, 1954), as well as the rather routine screenplay he had to work with.

Tsuburaya's visual effects sequences are very good throughout, but are somewhat inconsistent, with the bulk of the better effects appearing in the latter half of the picture—the crumbling icebergs are spectacular. The miniatures are also exceptionally executed, especially at the film's climax, featuring a showdown between jet fighters and Godzilla, which is probably the outstanding sequence of the film—the pyrotechnics of which decidedly exceed similar scenes in GODZILLA. The monster effects seem somewhat below the bar previously set by Tsuburaya, including close-up puppets that fail to match the monster suits.

Of course, despite his sequel's rather routine nature, Godzilla would continue to raid again and again over the next six decades.

—August Ragone

GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN
Gojira no Gyakushu, 1955, 82 minutes

Director MOTOYOSHI ODA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Original Story SHIGERU KAYAMA Screenplay TAKEO MURATA and SHIGEKI HADAKI Cinematography SEIICHI ENDO Music MASARU SAITO Visual Effects Director EII TSUBURAYA
HIROSHI KOIZUMI (Shaidi Tsukiko) SETSUO KAKAYAMA (Hidem Yamaji) MINORU CHIAKI (Hiroshi Kobayashi) YOSHIKO TSUCHIYA (Tajima) MASAO SHIMIZU (Dr. Tadokoro) TAKASHI SHIMURA (Dr. Kiyoshi Yamane)

1962: GODZILLA VS KING KONG



KING KONG VS. GODZILLA
Kingu Kongu tai Gojira, 1962, 98 minutes

Director ISHIRO HONDA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay SHINICHI SEKIZAWA Cinematographer HAJIME KOIZUMI Music AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects Director EJI TSUBURAYA
TADAO TAKASHIMA (Osamu Sakurai) YU FUJIKI (Kinsaburo Furue) MIE HAMA (Fumiko Sakurai) AKIKO WAKABAYASHI (Tamiye) KENJI SAHARA (Kazuo Fujita) ICHIRO ARISHIMA (Mr. Tako)

featured in over a hundred popular films and television shows.

The infamous Kong suit was not up to the par of what Toho's visual effects department could accomplish, due to the aforementioned budget cuts (even so, two suits were constructed, as well as several puppets). But as legend has it, Tsuburaya *wanted* this incarnation of Kong to appear comical. Godzilla, on the contrary, appears more menacing than in the previous film. While the miniature sets were as large and elaborate as ever, Tsuburaya chose to shoot much the action at normal speed, which doesn't always allow for the illusion of mass and size. Tsuburaya also permitted his monster suit actors, Haruo Nakajima and Shoichi Hirose, to freely choreograph their own fight scenes. Based on the popularity of Pro Wrestling, they came up with some memorable, if unorthodox, fight scenes.

Opening on August 11, 1962, the film went on to break box office records in Japan (racking up over 10 million tickets), and also became a clear winner for Universal the following summer (pulling in \$1,250,000). Toho quickly planned to shoot a rematch—since this battle ended in a tie—but the great age would have to wait five more years until he could break out in KING KONG ESCAPES.

For seven years the Big G remained dormant, but even more terrible monsters were sprung to life by Toho in RODAN (1956), THE MYSTERIANS (1957), THE H-MAN (1958), VARAN (1958), MOTHRA (1961) and GORATH (1962). What finally brought Godzilla back to life came across the ocean from Hollywood. In the late 1950s, visual effects master Willis O'Brien, who brought KING KONG to life in 1933, found no luck pitching his latest pet project, "King Kong vs. Frankenstein", to the big studios, but it eventually caught the eye of John Beck, a former producer at Universal. Beck found it tough going until he approached Toho, who were interested in a foreign co-production for their 30th Anniversary, and this would be a perfect opportunity to bring Godzilla back to the big screen. Thus, KING KONG VS. GODZILLA was born.

Beck was able to convince Toho to foot the entire licensing fees for the character of Kong from RKO, which amounted to 80 million yen (\$222,222.22 USD), more than three times the average budget of Toho's visual effects films at that time. Because of the cost to "hire" the American Contender, the budget for the film was slashed to 5 million yen (\$13,888.89 USD). Keeping the budget restrictions in mind, Honda and Tsuburaya, along with screenwriter Sekizawa, envisioned a general entertainment picture along the lines of MOTHRA, but playing up the comedic aspects—especially in regards to the casting. The lead was given to Tadao Takashima, a popular actor and comedian, who was paired with comic foil Yu Fujiki—a sort of Japanese Abbot &

The DUEL OF THE CENTURY!
Who Will Win: GODZILLA OR KONG?



Costello. Mr. Tako, the greedy advertising executive, was played by Ichiro Arishima, a physical comedian who was beloved by audiences as the "Japanese Chaplin", and was

August Rogone



1964: MOTHRA VS GODZILLA

After KING KONG VS. GODZILLA's massive success, Toho's literary department looked for some other western creation to duke it out with the Big G—hopefully one that fell into the public domain. Initially, they came up with the Frankenstein Monster, and even developed a full-blown screenplay, “Frankenstein vs. Godzilla”—but during development, the colossal Frankenstein monster was dropped in favor of the titular terror from another film that was a box office success on both sides of the Pacific: MOTHRA (1961). Elements from the earlier screenplay would eventually wind up in MOTHRA VS. GODZILLA as well as the Japanese-US production FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD (1965).

MOTHRA VS. GODZILLA is a perfect storm where all of the elements and personalities come together in unison to create a film that stands above many of the others. Honda's deft direction, Sekizawa's sharp screenplay, Tsuburaya's wondrous wizardry, and Ifukube's spectacular score become one, resulting in arguably the best Godzilla film of the Showa Era (1954-1975). Honda's swift pacing and sense of scale do not desert him as he guides the interplay between the film's three lead actors, as well as top-notch performances from Yoshifumi Tajima as the greedy Kumayama, pawn of the opportunistic Torahata, essayed by the versatile Kenji Sahara.

Sekizawa's imaginative narrative is fast paced yet richly detailed, delicately tracing a number of human stories through the grander web of its plot, as well as lightly touching on social issues of the time, including the resort/tourism boom, the

influence of media, and political corruption. While this is beautifully fleshed out, it does not preclude the monster scenes, which are plentiful and epic. Tsuburaya's visual effects undoubtedly represent some of his most ambitious and diverse undertakings for a monster film, and this may well be one of Tsuburaya's most miniature-filled monster films, featuring a virtual orgy of military hardware.

The film's primary terrors were realized in perhaps their very best incarnations at the hands of the man in charge of the fabrication department, Teizo Toshimitsu. Known to fans as the *Mosugoji* (or “Mothgodzi”), this Godzilla is the hands down favorite and considered epitome of the Showa Era films, brought to life once again by Haruo Nakajima. While numerous props of Mothra were used to bring the creature to life, it is the huge, wire-operated mechanical marionette with a massive wingspan (whose many intricate functions were manipulated via radio control) that is simply the most magnificent representation of the adult Mothra in any film before or since. Both radio-controlled mechanical and human-operated hand puppets of the twin larvae were employed—the latter with a silk-spitting mechanism using liquid styrofoam.

Takeo Kita's art direction, from the ordinary to the oversized sets created to bring the Twin Faeries to reality, is superb. Cinematographer Koizumi's live action lensing is at its best, taking full advantage of the Tohoscope format, which is carried over to the visual effects scenes, shot by Sadamasa Arikawa. Akira Watanabe's visual effects art direction well displays the ambition of the production. Tying it all together is the magnificent music

of Ifukube—one of his best and fullest *kaiju elga* scores, which underlines and punctuates the images with every cue.

The overseas rights to the film were negotiated by Henry G. Saperstein, who would be directly involved in shaping a number of Toho productions during the 1960s, who then licensed those rights to American International Pictures for theatrical and television distribution. Retitled GODZILLA VS THE THING, the film was dubbed into English by Titra Studios and only suffered some minor pruning (Japanese-language signs and the editing down of the Twin Faeries’ “Sacred Spring”). The trade off was that the AIP version featured an entire Godzilla sequence dropped from the Japanese version—cruisers from the USN's 7th Fleet bombarding the Big G with their latest conventional weapon, the Frontier Missile. This spectacular sequence is one of the film's major highlights, and offers the rare occasion when an Americanization trumps the original Japanese version.

MOTHRA VS. GODZILLA is a beautifully orchestrated balance between monster action and human drama, with characters that carry you through the narrative as if you are there, and unearthly kaiju that exist in our world as divine beings who wield the elements of nature, making mere mortals tremble before them. It is one of the many major productions crafted by Honda and Tsuburaya, who were at the top of their abilities, creating a memorable cinematic experience full of mythology, spectacle, and heart—and one of the best Godzilla films of all time.

—August Ragona



MOTHTRA VS. GODZILLA
Masura Iai Gojira, 1964, 88 minutes

Director ISHIRO HONDA Executive
Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay
SHINICHI SEKIZAWA Cinematography
HAJIME KOIZUMI Music AKIRA IFUKUBE
Special Visual Effects Director EUJI
TSUBURAYA
AKIRA TAKARADA (Ichira Sakai) YURIKO
HOSHI (Junko Nakanishi) HIROSHI
KOIZUMI (Professor Miura) YU FUJIKI
(Nakamura) EMI and YUMI ITO (Twin
Fairies) YOSHIFUMI TAJIMA (Kumayama)
KENJI SAHARA (Jira Tarahata) JUN TAZAKI
(Muroto, City Desk Editor)

東
映

夏木陽介
星由里子
若林映子
小泉博
サビーナ

伊藤雄之助
佐原健二
平田昭彦
村松道平

宇宙超怪獣地球を
大襲撃するゴジラ
ラドンモスラ
世紀の怪獣戦争へ

天然色 三大怪獣

地球最大の決戦



1964: GHIDRAH, THE 3 HEADED MONSTER

A police detective is assigned to escort the princess of some other Asian country on her visit to Japan. Sabotage is afoot, and the princess's plane is destroyed, but not before a strange voice and eerie light tells the royal woman to escape from the plane in mid-flight. At the same time, a strange series of events occurs... heat waves come in the winter, UFOs appear fleetingly around Japan; a meteor crashes into the mountains, and a science team is sent to investigate it. Later, a woman resembling the princess begins to attract street crowds with her bizarre predictions of impending doom by monsters appearing: Godzilla, Rodan, and the King Ghidorah—a three headed,

lightning-spewing dragon who explodes out of the meteorite.

The "prophets" is indeed the missing princess, but she claims to be an alien, and having made the news, her assassins begin to track her down. As Godzilla and Rodan battle to the death, King Ghidorah spectacularly lays waste to everything in his path. It's up to the surviving Mothra larva to wrangle the two other native monsters into battling the alien invader. During the course of the battle, one of the space monster's lightning bolts hits a mountain, inadvertently dispensing of the assassins in their car and burying them under an avalanche of rock. Encased in Mothra's webbing, the three monsters are

finally able to drive the interplanetary beast from the Earth.

Hot on the success of *MOTHRA VS. GODZILLA*, Toho went right into production on what was a direct follow up and also a departure from the themes explored in the last two Godzilla films. It's also the only time two consecutive Godzilla films were produced in the same year. GHIDRAH had so many plot points converging it seemed hard for some to keep track. This time the idea was to introduce a new kaiju, this one from outer space: a three-headed dragon named King Ghidorah, who would later become one of Toho's top three money-making kaiju. The film sports some spectacular set pieces (the base of Mt. Fuji) as well as Rodan's first appearance since his 1956 debut.

Composer Ifukube's theme for King Ghidorah would become one of the most popular he would write outside of the Godzilla theme itself. The Godzilla suit for this outing is a re-upholstered version (especially in the face) from the previous film. Comedy is also introduced with a "monster summit meeting" between Godzilla, Rodan, and Mothra, translated by the Twin Fairies.

—Bob Eggleton



GHIDRAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER

San Daikajiu Chikyū Saidai-na Kessen, 1964, 93 minutes

Director ISHIRO HONDA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay SHINICHI SEKIZAWA Cinematography HAJIME KOIZUMI Music AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects Director Eiji TSUBURAYA
YOSUKE NATSUKI (Detective Shinda) YURIKO HOSHI (Naoko Shinda) HIROSHI KOZUMI (Professor Murai) AKIKO WAKABAYASHI (Princess Salina) EMI & YUMI ITO (Twin Fairies) TAKASHI SHIMURA (Dr. Tsukamoto) AKIHIKO HIRATA (Chief Detective Okita) HISAYA ITO (Malmess)

ALL NEW SIGHTS!
ALL NEVER to be FORGOTTEN!



MONSTER ZERO is a direct and yet loose sequel to the previous GHIDRAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER. In this, a spaceship, The P-1, is launched from World Space Authority in Japan to the mysterious "Planet X" (appearing to be a moon of Jupiter), which has been sending strange magnetic signals. Aboard the ship are astronauts Fuji (Takara) and Glenn (Adams). Upon landing, the two explorers discover a barren world with Jupiter spectacularly occupying most of the sky above its craggy peaks. Eventually, both astronauts and their ship are shanghaied underground to find that the planet is inhabited by a race of beings whose life force is controlled by electronic impulses. It is also revealed their planet is being ravaged by King Ghidorah—known to them as Monster Zero.

The Controller of Planet X has a simple request: they need Monsters Zero-1 and Zero-2—Godzilla and Rodan—to defeat Ghidorah. They appear to have knowledge that at some time in the past, both battled Ghidorah on earth and prevailed (Mothra is completely omitted). Perhaps the odd UFOs seen in the previous film allude to

the X-lans' early presence? In exchange for earth unloading the two behemoths on an alien planet, a "miracle cure for all disease" is promised in return. It becomes pretty obvious early on that this is a ruse for far sinister intentions.

At the same time, goofy inventor Tetsuo Torii (Kubo) has invented a device for women which can emit an earsplitting sound to deter would-be muggers. He's astonished when he gets a phone call from "World Education Corporation" wanting to purchase his device for a great deal of money. Torii is also dating Fuji's sister and wants desperately to impress the protective brother to get his blessing for marriage. The company representative is the devastatingly alluring Miss Namikawa (Mizuno) who, not-so-coincidentally, happens to be dating Glenn!

Planet X reveals its spaceships have already arrived on earth to take the monsters Godzilla and Rodan to their new home. Godzilla is at the bottom of Lake Myojin and Rodan has hibernated in the side of a mountain at Washigasawa, both in Nagano. The monsters are spectacularly airlifted to Planet X by the alien ships' force

beams, and at once battle King Ghidorah in a show-stopping scene. As predicted, the "wonder drug" is nothing more than a ruse demanding that earth surrender to Planet X, and of course the aliens are going to use Godzilla, Rodan and King Ghidorah—all now under their control—to conquer earth.

Miss Namikawa, as it happens, is a spy for Planet X but has, against her directives, fallen in love with Glenn. She turncoats and reveals that the aliens were after Torii's device, because they become dysfunctional with loud electronic sounds. We only ever see Japan being spectacularly attacked; however, it's mentioned that King Ghidorah is in the United States at one point. Super science—and Torii's audio alarm—are what loosens the aliens' grip on the monsters, and coming to their senses, Godzilla and Rodan again send Ghidorah packing back to space.

MONSTER ZERO was a landmark picture for Toho in 1965. To many, the film represents the "quintessential" '60s Godzilla film and an end to the "Golden Years" studio enjoyed from 1954 through 1965. It was also a loose co-production with Henry G. Saperstein's Hollywood-



MONSTER ZERO
Kajiu Daisensu, 1965, 94 mins.

Director **ISHIRO HONDA** Executive Producer **TOMOYUKI TANAKA** Screenplay **SHINICHI SEKIZAWA**
Cinematography **HAJIME KOZUMI** Music **AKIRA IFUKUBE** Visual Effects Director **EIJI TSUBURAYA**
NICK ADAMS (Glenn) **AKIRA TAKARADA** (Fuji) **KUJI MIZUNO** (Namikawa) **JUN TAZAKI** (Dr. Sakurai)
AKIRA KUBO (Tetsuo Torii) **KEIKO SAWAI** (Haruna Fuji) **YOSHIO TSUCHIYA** (Controller)

based UPA Productions. Saperstein had, with American International Pictures, been instrumental in getting their distribution and cooperation with three previous Toho films: **GODZILLA VS. THE THING** (1964), **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD** (1965), and **WHAT'S UP TIGER LILY?** (1966; a satirical re-dubbing/re-editing by Woody Allen of two of Toho's serio-comic "Secret Police" films).

MONSTER ZERO, as titled **INVASION OF THE ASTRO-MONSTER**, was slated as an AIP release for 1967, but for reasons unknown—it is suspected that Saperstein and AIP chief, Samuel Z. Arkoff, had some kind of falling out—it wound up back in Saperstein's hands. The film would not see a US release until 1970, as the more enigmatic sounding **MONSTER ZERO** on a hugely successful roadshow double-bill with the Toho/UPA production **THE WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS** (also co-produced by Saperstein's UPA) via indie film distributor Maron Films.

For some time Toho Pictures, wanting a bigger world audience, had been courting Western actors to directly work in their films. Starting with **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD**, venerable actor and Academy Award nominee Nick Adams was cast in the lead role. The experience with Adams was quite successful for Toho, so he was requested

for **MONSTER ZERO**. One actor apparently approached who refused was David Janssen (**THE FUGITIVE**), but previous experience made Adams the final best option. Adams had been quite busy in 1965 with **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD**; the Lovecraft adaptation for AIP, **DIE MONSTER DIE**; and going back to Japan that summer for **MONSTER ZERO**.

The film is almost a re-introduction of King Ghidorah. It also was the first time in a Japanese film that a rather steamy romance between a Western man and an Asian woman was depicted onscreen, with Adams and Mizuno. In fact, the monster battles, which total about 10 minutes, kind of take a back seat to some far deeper human interaction. Eiji Tsuburaya continued to lighten the tone, as he did in the previous film, with Godzilla in Planet X's lighter gravity doing the "shie"—which is actually a "happy pose" Tsuburaya's favorite comics character, *Oto Matsu-kun*, was known to do. Fans either love this scene or hate it. Director Honda was apparently opposed to its inclusion, but Tsuburaya won out.

This film is also the first time we see Japan's super-science at its full power: the Japan-based "World Space Authority" launch base seems to have supplanted Florida's Cape Kennedy, and the creation



The most GIGANTIC MONSTER EXPLOSION of the space age!

of the hi-tech "A-Cycle Light Ray" at the 11th hour is what, along with Tetsuo Torii's loud-sounding device, does the aliens in. The look of the film, its pace, and the effects work are all top-rate, though there is some stock footage from **RODAN** (1956), **MOTHRA** (1961) and the previous film **GHIDRAH** (1964) used for the first time as a budget-saving measure.

The best set piece is the sprawling Planet X surface, which looked better than **STAR TREK**'s planet sets on US television the next year. The miniature set, with its pointy mountains and giant Jupiter as part of the background/matte painting, is a seeming tribute to renowned astronomical artist Chesley Bonestell. The X-ians' underground base is a strange and eerie set of mushroom-shaped corridors unlike anything ever seen in film at the time.

This film was the last time that the "dream team" of director Ishiro Honda, writer Shinichi Sekizawa, music composer Akira Ifukube, and special effects director Eiji Tsuburaya would all work together on a Godzilla-related film.

—Bob Eggleton



1966: GODZILLA VS THE SEA MONSTER

Ryota is a young man determined to find his older brother Yata, who was lost at sea. With friends in tow, he "borrows" a yacht, which is—unbeknownst to them—occupied by a fugitive bank robber. While all are asleep, Yata takes the boat out, much to the consternation of the crook, and refuses to turn it around. After a few weeks, they run into a violent storm near a South Pacific island, and in the maelstrom, the yacht is destroyed by a giant mutant shrimp: Ebirah.

Washed up on the island, the castaways discover it is home to the terrorist organization Red Bamboo, who have enslaved natives from Infant Island and are developing a renegade nuclear program. They also control Ebirah, and use a yellow liquid to ward him off their own boats. The missing Yata also is a prisoner of the terrorists, but when the group frees him and are chased to a cliff edge and manage to hide in a cave, they make an astonishing discovery: Godzilla is hibernating there.

Godzilla is awakened and, of course, battles Ebirah (twice), a squadron of jet fighters, and a giant condor. Mothra, in the course of things, shows up for a short tussle as well. In the mayhem everyone is set free, and a large net-like basket is made for Mothra to airlift everyone back to her island.

This is the film where many feel the series first went non-linear. How Godzilla wound up sleeping in a titanic cavern on an island is unknown, but it seems as if he has not been seen in a long time. This film started as a story idea for what would have been the Rankin-Bass King Kong film they were to co-produce with Toho, but Rankin-Bass rejected the story and instead penned their own later on. Toho felt it was a good enough idea to replace Kong with Godzilla, and this Godzilla entry was born. Mothra's island is completely re-imagined in visual terms, and the famous Ito sisters, The Peanuts, were replaced by another twin pop act, Pair Bambi.

Isiro Honda had left the series at this point, and the film was handed to action film director Jun Fukuda on Honda's recommendation, whose helming gave a completely different feel and tone to this film. It is full of bright colors, as well as a different environment than the Japan mainland—a South Pacific island. Akira Kurosawa composer Masaru Sato was brought in to create a bounciness, fun, and sometimes surfboard-cued soundtrack.

The Godzilla suit used in this was built for extensive water tank use as well as some underwater shots, and in some scenes it looks like an old creased raincoat—betraying its waterlogged condition. At around the same time, the suit was brought over to Tsuburaya Productions and was used for Ultraman's foe Jirass. **GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER** was the first Godzilla movie to skip a theatrical release in the US, and was sold directly to television in 1969 via Walter Reade-Sterling, Inc.

—Bob Eggleton

GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER

Gojira, Ebira, Masura Nankai-no Daikettō, 1966, 87 minutes

Director JUN FUKUDA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay SHINICHI SEKIZAWA
Cinematography HAJIME KOIZUMI Music MASARU SATO Visual Effects SADAMASA ARIKAWA Visual
Effects Supervisor EIJI TSUBURAYA
AKIRA TAKARADA (Yoshimura) KUMI MIZUNO [Daya] TORU WATANABE (Ryoto Kane) TORU IBUKI
[Yoto Kane] CHOTARO TOGIN [Ichino] HIDEO SUNAZUKA [Niita] PAIR BAMBI [Twin Foreris] AKIHIKO
HIRATA [Captain Lionwell], JUN TAZAKI [Base Commander]

1967: SON OF GODZILLA

A team of scientists set up a base on a faraway Solgell Island in the South Pacific to conduct experiments on weather. The island is home to some bothersome, six foot-long, carnivorous mantises called "Kamakuras" (Toho's official English rendering is "Kamacuras"). Their first major experiment goes awry thanks to inexplicable sonar signals and the weather balloon detonates too soon, triggering a violent, radioactive storm. When the storm subsides, the scientists come out to find the island devastated, and thanks to radiation in the experiment packages, the giant mantises now dwarf them: a hundred feet or more long, and a genuine threat.

The odd sonar signals are determined to be coming from a large rocky mound. The Kamakuras seem to be curious about it and start digging, and a giant egg is revealed. It immediately breaks open to reveal a little Godzilla! Suddenly, Godzilla himself appears—

responding to the signals from the egg—and he battles the Kamakuras. After saving his son, he takes the helpless little beast to the safety of a volcanic hot springs. Later, as "Minilla" grows in size and learns to use his atomic breath thanks to Papa Godzilla, he saves a girl named Saeko, who grew up on the island after her Japanese father died.

Since this is an island of monsters, Minilla winds up in the web of Kumonga, a colossal arachnid, which has been hibernating in a rocky valley. After being rescued by Godzilla, they battle the surviving Kamakuras and Kumonga while the scientists race to repair their damaged radio to call for a rescue team. They determine that to survive, they must use their weather equipment to freeze the tropical island. As they are rescued by submarine, they see the poignant sight of Godzilla and his son (who will awaken when things warm up again) curled up together in the snow.

This is the second film directed by Jun

Fukuda set on an island, and it was released in Japan as a double bill aimed at the "date" crowd—younger men and women—with the thinking that girls would like a cute baby monster named Minilla (or "Minya" in the original US parlance). Again, Fukuda went for a lush "island" color palette, much like the previous film. SON OF GODZILLA features some terrific island set pieces and topography—towering peaks, bubbling volcanic pits, and the insectoid monsters, which are entirely elaborate marionettes.

Godzilla's appearance was noticeably changed for the film to a rather googly-eyed affair—probably to match the equally odd-looking Minilla. This was the first time Haruo Nakajima did not entirely play Godzilla—he donned the suit for water scenes, while "land" duties went to two other, taller actors (supervised by Nakajima): Hiroshi Sekita and former pro-baseball star Seiji Onaka, to better offset the size difference between Godzillas Jr. and Sr. SON OF GODZILLA was sold directly to US television in 1969 by Walter Reade-Sterling, Inc. It is often confused with UPA's first regional release of GODZILLA'S REVENGE in 1971, known as MINYA, SON OF GODZILLA.

—Bob Eggleton

Have you ever seen a monster
HATCHED FROM A
MONSTER EGG?

SON OF GODZILLA

Kajito-na Kessen Gajirana Musuko, 1967, 86 minutes

Director JUN FUKUDA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay SHINICHI SEKIZAWA and KAZUKE SHIBA Cinematography KAZUO YAMADA Music MASARU SATO Visual Effects SADAMASA ARIKAWA Visual Effects Supervisor EJI TSUBURAYA AKIRA KUBO (Goro Maki) TADAO TAKASHIMA (Professor Kusumi) BEVERLY MAEDA (Saeko Matsumiya) AKIHIKO HIRAYA (Fujisaki) KENJI SAHARA (Moria) YOSHIO TSUCHIYA (Funakawa)

1968: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS

At the close of the 20th Century, all of Earth's monsters have been collected and confined, perhaps not willingly, to an area known as Monsterland, off the coast of Japan. Things seem very peaceful, which is a good indication something sinister is about to happen—which it does, when aliens called the Kilaak launch their attack and free the monsters to smash Earth's major cities. A brave team of scientists and astronauts must find a way to stop both the monsters and the aliens before all hope is lost.

Made as Toho's 20th *kaiju* *eiga*, this was also supposed to be the final Godzilla movie. As a monster mash celebration, this movie works wonderfully. Where it falls slightly short is the plot; the aliens are given no real reason for attacking the Earth (except conquest), and the heroes are mostly two-dimensional. But it really doesn't matter; this is all about the monsters, and boy, are they on display here with some great set pieces.

Gorosaurus rising out of the ground to destroy Paris's Arc de Triomphe... Rodan flying over Moscow... Mothra destroying Peking... Godzilla's attack on New York. The entire spectacle in the first act of the film is nothing short of awesome. DESTROY ALL MONSTERS also ends with the greatest monster battle ever filmed, in terms of spectacle and sheer logistics. Godzilla suit actor Haruo Nakajima choreographed the final battle with four other suit actors and a plethora of wires to contend with, and made it all work. This is all accompanied by another excellent soundtrack from Akira Ifukube.

The visual effects team, supervised by Eiji Tsuburaya and directed by Sadamasa Arikawa, do an outstanding job with the various spacecraft, optical effects, and miniature landscapes. The craggy, eerie moonscape is a standout among many great sets, as is the Paris set. Interestingly enough, Godzilla's attack on New York City is probably the least impressive of the worldwide destruction scenes. An older suit (the '66) is used, and he never comes ashore to do any really impressive damage. Fortunately, Godzilla, Rodan, Mothra, and Manda make up for it with a devastating visit to Tokyo in the second act.

This is a rather stand-alone Godzilla movie, since many of the monsters presented here had been killed or destroyed in previous films, or were much smaller in their previous incarnations. The Twin Fairies also don't appear with Mothra this time, making the movie firmly grounded in science fiction, rather than science fantasy.

When I saw this for the first time as a kid, I didn't care about the thin plot or characterizations. I wanted monsters, and I got eleven of them. Sure, not all of them got to shine in the spotlight, but enough of them did. I had not seen several of the monsters in action before, such as Anguirus, Gorosaurus, or King Ghidorah. My mind was blown by the entire experience, including the final scene where the monsters are shown living in peace on Ogasawara Island. While it's not the best Godzilla movie ever made, it is my favorite.

—David McRobie

The **MONSTERS** are in **REVOLT!**
The world is on the
BRINK OF DESTRUCTION!

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS

Kaiju Soaringaki, 1968, 89 minutes

Director ISHIRO HONDA Executive Producer
TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay ISHIRO HONDA and
TAKESHI KIMURA Cinematographer TAIICHI KANKURA
Music AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects SADAMASA
ARIKAWA Visual Effects Supervisor EJI TSUBURAYA
AKIRA KUBO (Captain Katsuo Yamabe) JUN TAZAKI
(Dr. Yoshida) YUKIKO KOBAYASHI (Kyoka Manabe)
YOSHIO TSUCHIYA (Dr. Otani) KYOKO AI (Kilaak
Queen) ANDREW HUGHES (Dr. Stevenson) HISAYA ITO
(Major Tada) KENJI SAHARA (Nishikawa)



1969: GODZILLA'S REVENGE

Ichiro is a monster-crazed boy whose parents both work and has one friend, who is not that interested in monsters. He also has a bully in his life, Sanko, whom he nicknames "Gabara". In trying to deal with his latchkey existence, he dreams about going to Monster Island and hanging out with Minilla, Godzilla's son. Together, Ichiro and Minilla both learn some life lessons while watching Godzilla battle Kumonga, Kamakiras, and Ebirah. Godzilla teaches Minilla to stand up to his kaiju version of Gabara, which he does, soundly defeating him (with a little help from Ichiro). These dream world fantasies come in handy when Ichiro has to deal with two bumbling bank robbers, finally facing his fears, and at last takes on the bully.

This is one of the finest children's fantasy movies ever made. Ichiro is a true protagonist, learning and growing through the course of the story. He starts out a shy, introverted kid, and ends up dispatching his bully, but also takes responsibility for his actions (the prank with the motorcycle; if that sign painter hadn't been so touchy, he'd never have ended up in that sticky situation). Some misguided critics and fans think that Ichiro has become a bigger bully by standing up for himself, but at the end of the movie, the gang has elected to follow Ichiro out of respect, not fear. Deep for a kid's movie, huh?

The sole new monster in this production, Gabara, is also pretty inspired—definitely a unique monster in the Toho stable. He's more like an ogre than anything else, and has a "hands on" shocking electrical power. And like a typical bully, he's not very bright, as is witnessed in his attack on Godzilla, after being defeated by Minilla.

The music composer is also unique: Kunio Miyauchi, who had become famous for his scores for Tsuburaya Productions' ULTRA Q and ULTRAMAN in 1966. He's a perfect choice. Neither the outer space themes of Ifukube nor the island adventure music of Sato would have worked as well for this more down to earth setting.

REVENGE is also one of the more divisive Godzilla movies ever made. Following Gamera's lead, it was the first Godzilla movie made with a child as the protagonist; and it's full of stock footage. Honda makes skillful use of said footage, incorporating it into the dreams of Ichiro. Thus, it makes perfect sense that Godzilla would change forms—how many dreams stay static? I can understand some fans' ire at going to a theater to see a movie titled "Godzilla's Revenge" thinking they would be getting a different style of movie, but that's not the film's fault. I've always wondered at the reasons many hardcore fans hate this movie and the various kids in *kaiju eiga*. When I was a kid, I would have loved to be in one of these movies. Ichiro seems like a kid I would have wanted as a friend.

—David McRobie



EVERY BOY NEEDS
A FRIEND, EVEN IF IT'S
A MONSTER.

GODZILLA'S REVENGE

Gojira Minira Gabara Oru Kaiju Daishingeki, 1969, 70 minutes

Director ISHIRO HONDA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay SHINICHI SEKIZAWA Cinematographer MOTOYOSHI TOMIOKA Music KUNIO MIYAUCHI Visual Effects Supervisor EIJI TSUBURAYA
TOMONORI YAZAKI (Ichiro Miki) KENJI SAHARA (Kenichi Miki) MCHIKO NAKA (Tomiko Miki) HIDEYO AMAMOTO (Shinpei Minami) HIDEMI ITO (Sachiko)
JUNICHI ITO (Sanko) SACHIO SAKAI (Senbayashi) KAZUO SUZUKI (Okuda) YOSHIFUMI TAJIMA (Detective)



An old fisherman brings a strange tadpole to the Yano house. Meanwhile, a much larger version of the tadpole destroys tankers in Tokyo Bay. Suddenly, a strange monster is devouring all the pollution the area of Suruga Bay and leaving a deadly trail of sulfuric acid in its wake. Young Ken Yano knows Godzilla will show up to halt the odious creature's destructive path, and sure enough, mankind's monstrous savior arrives to save the earth. But if humanity does not change its polluting ways, will another Hedorah arise?

This is the movie that firmly established Godzilla as a *de facto* superhero in the '70s. It's also the closest thing Godzilla has to an "art film". It has psychedelic imagery, odd cartoon animation, montage, and a strong ecological message all wrapped up with giant monster mayhem and a kid hero. There's no other movie like it. It was also the last Godzilla movie to get the Titan Studios (formerly Titra) dubbed treatment when released in the US, along with AIP's patented over-the-top exploitation campaign. And how can anyone forget the movie in which you believe Godzilla can fly?

Following in the steps of *GODZILLA'S REVENGE*, *HEDORAH* was produced as a kiddie matinee, but it's also rather graphic. The mist Hedorah exudes eats away flesh in front of the camera, leaving behind discolored bones. A man falls to his death after corroded girders disintegrate. Godzilla also suffers a lot of physical

damage from Hedorah, something that had never happened in the movies before. One of his eyes suffers injury due to a toxic spitball fired by the Smog Monster, who also corrodes one of Godzilla's hands.

Hedorah is one of the most iconic giant monsters ever created. In *kaiju* *eiga*, that's saying something. The creature is truly nightmarish, freakish, and absurd, in the best way possible. In the narrative, it's speculated that Hedorah is from deep space, coming to our world attached to a meteorite, but it's never proven conclusively. It could be a brand new life form spawned by all the unnatural pollution dumped into the ocean. Or perhaps it was a weapon sent by the cockroaches from Planet M in the Hunter Nebula to terraform the Earth for their invasion.?

Hedorah is the first multi-stage monster in the series, as it has four different forms: a tadpole form, a frog form, a flying stingray form, and finally, the adult form. It can shift between the stingray and adult form at will. This ability to morph from one form to another was very unique at the time. Perhaps Hedorah was also a mimic; it could've adapted itself after coming into contact with Professor Yano, when it was able to assume a four-legged form. After the first battle with Godzilla, it is able to change into the final form. Hedorah also mimics Godzilla's actions and even develops a ray beam to use against Godzilla. But this is just my own speculation—at any rate, it is

certainly the most repulsive monster in the kaiju pantheon.

The adult-stage Hedorah suit was expertly crafted—looking exactly like one would think a living pile of sludge and slime would look, with malevolent, burning red eyes. Haruo Nakajima, climbing once again into the 1968 Godzilla suit (still in useable shape), does a splendid job giving the Big G a great personality. The viewer can almost feel his disgust with mankind even after saving them. When the giant electrodes created to kill Hedorah fail again, he invokes a "you have GOT to be kidding" look through body movement, and by the climax, you can sense how beaten and fatigued Godzilla is from this battle.

The soundtrack by Riichiro Manabe, like the rest of the film, is also quite unusual. It's a far step away from anything Sato or Ifukube ever executed, but it also fits the movie perfectly—almost. "Godzilla's Theme" is not quite the powerful anthem it should've been. A student of Ifukube, Manabe is to be credited for doing something different here, and it does work. The bulk of his music is creepy, mysterious, and atmospheric. He also wrote the music for the theme song "Give Back the Sun!" ("Kaese! Taiyo-o") with lyrics by director Banno (this was adapted for the English-language AIP release as "Save the Earth").

The visual effects by Teruyoshi Nakano are very good given the much smaller budget he was working with after the



流れ星でやって来た
公害怪獣ヘドラノ
街を森をふみつぶし
二大怪獣が大決戦ノ

警告

MONSTER FROM SPACE the same year the contracts ended.

Back in 1972, I remember seeing the poster for this movie when it was released in the US, and while it scared me, I still wanted to see it. I did, a couple of years later on television, and loved it. This was the second Godzilla movie I had ever seen—and I was hooked. As mentioned before, this was the last of the series AIP released in the States—under the easy-to-exploit title *GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER*—to capitalize on contemporary ecology issues. The theme song was changed to “Save the Earth”, co-written and performed by an uncredited Adrian Russ (and AIP secretary at the time). This is a fine example to the lengths both AIP and Titan would go to make these movies marketable in the States.

I do still have one pressing question about this film... how did the stray cat at the nightclub not succumb to Hedorah's toxic sludge?

—David McRobie

POLLUTION'S HIDEOUS
SPAWN DOOMS THE EARTH
TO CHOKING HORROR...

passing of Eiji Tsuburaya in 1970, Hedorah's transformations are dynamic, and its deadly ray matches the crimson of its eyes perfectly. The visual effects also really enhance the overall “art film” look of the movie in the numerous out-of-narrative montages, pastiches, and scenes of islands of garbage moving across the surface of the sea. The miniature sets, bluescreen shots, and matte paintings are all effective and help to create an overall atmosphere—all supervised by director Yoshimitsu Banno, who was invested in every phase of the production.

Banno's direction is perfect for this off-kilter movie. There are really great, dreamlike shots, such as Hedorah flying through explosions and smoke towards Godzilla; and of course the night club scene is mind-bending psychedelia at its best. He also makes good use of the avant-garde style of animated political cartoons. Another standout scene is early on in the

film, when Dr. Yano goes scuba diving to look for the strange tadpole. We know Hedorah is going to find him, and the tension is palpable. It's too bad Banno never got to make another monster movie after this one, as he definitely had a very renegade approach to the genre.

The cast is quite good. Hiroyuki Kawase does a very good job as young Ken Yano (I was just a little jealous of all the monster toys he is seen playing with in the movie). Kawase, who appeared in Akira Kurosawa's *DODES'KA-DEN* (1970), would later star in 1973's *GODZILLA VS. MEGALON*. This was the first Godzilla movie that didn't employ any of the featured stars from earlier Toho *kaiju* *etiga*, as Toho released all of their contract players in 1970—some of which appeared in Ishiro Honda's *YOGI*,

GODZILLA VS. HEDORAH

Gojira tai Hedorah, 1971, 85 minutes

Director YOSHIMITSU BANNO Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay YOSHIMITSU BANNO and TAKESHI KIMURA Cinematographer YOICHI MANODA Music RICHIRO MANABE Visual Effects TERUYOSHI NAKANO
AKIRA YAMAUCHI (Dr. Taru Yano) TOSHIO SHIBA (Yuia Keuchi) HIROYUKI KAWASE (Ken Yano) KEIKO MARI (Miki Fujiyama) TOSHIE KIMURA (Toshie Yano) YOSHIO YOSHIDA (Gohsei)

1972: GODZILLA VS GIGAN

At the nadir of the Showa Era, Cockroaches from another planet invade Earth, intending to use giant monsters to wipe out humankind so they can live on this planet. A motley crew gets in their way, as do Godzilla and Anguirus. After many escapes, captures, and escapes (not to mention mass destruction), the home team monsters—and human ingenuity—vanquish the alien invaders.

This is a by-the-numbers Godzilla versus the Space Monsters movie, and sadly, it's very dreary. It's full of music and scenes from other, better

movies. The removal of the excessive stock footage would actually help to pick up the pace. Even the excellent music from Itakube is all stock, though put to good use.

At least the sole new monster of the movie, Gigan, is a very impressive creation. He is a cyborg, and comes equipped with a powerful buzzsaw in his abdomen—and makes good use of it against Anguirus, causing the first Toho monster blood to be spurted right across the camera lens. It's been said that Gigan is a monster in search of a better movie, since his personality barely amounts to being a bully and a coward.

This marks the first and only time Godzilla and Anguirus are seen conversing

in English (shown in the Japanese version via comic-book-style balloons, to reflect the comic book theme of the film, since the main character, Gengo, is a struggling manga artist). In the US version, the word balloons were removed and thoughtfully replaced with actual (if distorted) English. It's one of those weird moments that makes the '70s movies unlike any other *kaiju* *et al.* I wonder how many kids in that packed theater knew Godzilla was going to actually speak?

It's too bad this dreary, overlong movie marked Haruo Nakajima's last foray into suiting up as the Big G.

—David McRobie



GODZILLA VS. GIGAN

Chikyu Kogeki Meirei Gajira Tai Gaigan, 1972, 89 minutes

Director JUN FUKUDA Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Screenplay SHINICHI SEKIZAWA Music AKIRA IFUKUBE Cinematographer KIYOSHI HASEGAWA Visual Effects TERUYOSHI NAKANO HIROSHI ISHIKAWA (Gengo Kotaka) YURIKO HISHIM (Tomoko Tomoe) MINORU TAKASHIMA (Shosaku Takasugi) TOMOKO UMEDA (Mochiko Shima) TOSHIAKI NISHIZAWA (Kubota) ZAN FUJITA (Fumio Sudo) KUNIO MURAI (Takeshi Shima) GEN SHIMIZU (Defense Forces Commander)

1973: GODZILLA VS MEGALON

After years of nuclear bomb testing destroys much of their undersea kingdom, the leaders of Scetopia vow revenge on the surface dwellers and send their monster Megalon to attack. Meanwhile on the surface, an inventor named Goro Ibuki has finished his human-sized robot named Jet Jaguar that he controls via remote. But the agents of the undersea empire want the control device, and they kidnap Jet Jaguar, reprogram him, and use him to guide Megalon to Tokyo. Later, after control of Jet Jaguar is back in the inventor's hands, Jet Jaguar travels to Monster Island in order ask Godzilla for help. Godzilla and Jet Jaguar team up to fight Megalon and Gigan—the latter having been sent as support from the aliens of Space Hunter Nebula.

GODZILLA VS. MEGALON would be the first film in the Godzilla series specifically catering to the *tokusatsu* "Henshin Boom" of the early '70s. Influenced highly by such popular and well-regarded shows as ULTRAMAN and

KAMEN RIDER, this film would find at its center a robot hero making decisions and developing conscience and abilities beyond its original programming—a common science fiction trope explored by *tokusatsu* shows of the time. In fact, a month after GODZILLA VS. MEGALON was released in early March of 1973, Toho would premiere their own *tokusatsu* show entitled ZONE FIGHTER—featuring appearances by Godzilla, King Ghidorah, and Gigan—which would run for 26 episodes.

While some may consider this one of the weaker entries in the Godzilla series, if one imagines GODZILLA VS. MEGALON as a two-hour episode of a Jet Jaguar movie, you can see the possibilities and story potential that has, at its core, themes that would feel right at home during *tokusatsu* boom.

For the first time in nineteen years, Godzilla was not played by Haruo Nakajima. Taking over was actor Shinji Takagi, for his only stint in the role.

—David E. Chappelle



GODZILLA VS. MEGALON

Gajira tai Megara, 1973, 82 minutes

Director JUN FUKUDA Executive Producer TOMIYUKI TANAKA Screenplay JUN FUKUDA Cinematography YUZURU AIZAWA Film Editor MICHIO IKEDA Music RICHIO MANABE Visual Effects Director TERUYOSHI NAKANO KATSHIKO SASAKI (Goro Ibuki) YUTAKA HAYASHI (Hiroshi Inizawa) HIROYUKI KAWASE (Rakura Ibuki) ROBERT DUNHAM (Emperor Antonio) KOTARO TOMITA (Scetopian) Ulf OTSUKI (Scetopian) ROLF JESSER (Scetopian Communications)



1974: GODZILLA VS MECHAGODZILLA

On the southern Japanese island of Okinawa, a priestess and descendant of the Azumi royal family, while performing a *Ryukyuan* dance, faints after having horrifying premonitions that a monster will appear to destroy the world. Deep inside a cave, aliens from a planet slipping into a black hole have constructed a giant, cybernetic doppelganger in Godzilla's image with synthetic skin, dubbed Mechagodzilla. They send their juggernaut to attack Tokyo, but when the real Godzilla shows up and sheds its evil twin's disguise, the ruse is exposed. The mechanical weapon of mass destruction quickly overpowers Godzilla, allowing the aliens freedom to complete their mission unobstructed—their exodus to our world. Meanwhile, two archaeologists discover the secret that will unlock the ancient defender of the Azumi people, the giant guardian monster King Shisa (Caesar). Together, Godzilla and King Shisa team up and try to stop Mechagodzilla and the aliens from making their conquest plans bear fruit.

Jun Fukuda returns to direct his fifth and final film in the original series. Boasting a bigger budget than the preceding film, Fukuda and his crew pull out all the stops in terms of location, effects, and production value. Much of the film takes place in Okinawa, and the bigger budget allowed for principal photography shooting in Okinawa itself. The cave utilized in the picture, the Gyokusendo caverns, located just outside the capital city of Naha, is a real-life location and a popular tourist attraction.

Setting the story in Okinawa was an interesting choice that mirrors the theme of outside influence and colonization. Ironically, at this point in the series, Godzilla had become a major international icon and the foreign audience had become a major factor in the box office of the films. The message sometimes is at odds with, or maybe a statement on the American influence on Japanese culture. It is worth noting that Okinawa was still occupied by the American military, which may have had an influence on the filmmakers. The fact that the main monster's name is Caesar in the English translation (Shisa in the Japanese version) is also ironic considering the theme of the film—and that Shisa is a traditional guardian of the Azumi family and Okinawan culture.

Masaru Sato returns as well for his second consecutive outing as composer, with a bombastic big band style opening score that switches to a more traditional version of Okinawan music as the credits move to the island.

Boasting great miniatures, fantastic matte shots, and innovative camera angles (one shot in particular has Mechagodzilla facing his two foes on his right and left), this film, considered by some as pure fluff, really has a lot going for it if you look below the surface.

—David E. Chapelle

When the red moon sets and
the sun rises in the west...

GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA

Gajira tai Mekagajira, 1974, 84 minutes

Director JUN FUKUDA Executive Producer
TOMIYUKI TANAKA Screenplay HIROYASU
YAMAMURA & JUN FUKUDA Cinematography
YUZURU AIZAWA Music MASARU SAITO Visual
Effects Director TERUYOSHI NAKANO
MAASAKI DAIMON (Kessuke Shimizu) KAZUYA
AOYAMA (Masahito Shimizu) HIROSHI
KOZUMI (Professor Wogura) AKIHIKO HIRATA
(Professor Hideto Miyajima) REIKO TAJIMA
(Soeko Kaneshiro) HIROMI MATSUSHITA (Ikuo
Miyajima) GORO MUTSUMI (Kuranuma) SHIN
KISHIDA (Interpol Agent Nanbara) DAIGO
KUSANO (Blackhole Agent R1)





さらに狂豪となって、さっさと新武器を持って、メカゴジラがふみがえった！
地球を奪え——宇宙の事象に暴走獣・チタノザウルスと日本中を大破壊！



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1975: TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA

While searching the seabed for the remnants of the exploded Mechagodzilla, a research sub is destroyed by a giant dinosaur under the control of Dr. Mafune, a disgruntled and dismissed scientist developing a device that would allow him to control animals. A group of strange benefactors helped save his

daughter Katsura's life when an experiment went awry and caused her death; it is later revealed to him that they are aliens, who have now returned to reconstitute Mechagodzilla in order to conquer the Earth using his control device. Katsura was revived with cybernetic technology, her heart in particular, and now the invaders

TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA
Mekagajira no Gyakushu, 1975, 83 minutes
 Director ISHIRO HONDA Executive Producer TOMIYUKI TANAKA Screenplay YUKIKO TAKAYAMA Cinematography SOKEI TOMIOKA Music AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects Director TERUYOSHI NAKANO
 KATSUHIKO SASAKI (Akira Ichinose) TOMOKO AI (Katsura Mafune) AKIHIKO HIRATA (Shinza Mafune) KATSUMASA UCHIDA (Jira Murakashi) GORO MUTSUMI (Mugal) TADAO NAKAMARU (Interpol Chief Tagawa)

want to use her human brain in order to better control the upgraded Mechagodzilla. Now, controlled by the aliens and Katsura, Mechagodzilla and Titanosaurus team up to lay waste to Tokyo and destroy Godzilla. But is there any humanity or self-control remaining for Katsura to overcome her father's device?

Ishiro Honda, who directed many of the Showa Godzilla films, returns after six years to bookend the original series with a layered narrative concerning the theme of control and manipulation at its core. Almost every character in the story is being controlled or manipulated in some way. A major part of the screenplay deals with Dr. Mafune, a scientist isolated from the world and enveloped in his own feelings of revenge toward those who shunned him. The power and responsibility of science and its subsequent consequences are explored in various ways, including loss of control of one's ambition and identity when outside forces are needed to bring scientific theories to fruition. Like revenge, science is not a solitary endeavor, and can be exploited. When this happens, there are inevitable victims. No one is alone when developing a weapon that could help or harm. This harkens back to the character of Dr. Serizawa in the first film. Not coincidentally, the same actor who essayed Dr. Serizawa plays the obsessed Dr. Mafune: Akihiko Hirata.

Akira Ifukube returns to score the film after a seven-year absence. Much of his original themes are given a forceful punch up, and the film has an overall feeling of a final celebration for the iconic monster and for two of the men instrumental in his status as the king of the monsters. Ifukube himself would return to his themes sixteen years later when he would score five of the Heisei Series of Godzilla films, beginning with *GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH* (1991).

—David E. Chapple

1984: GODZILLA

Thirty years since he first appeared on movie screens and nine years since his last appearance (in **TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA**), the Big G stomped into movie theaters once again. Not moored to its past save for the original **GODZILLA**, and ignoring the storylines and continuity of the previous series, the new films could begin afresh, in what would later be dubbed the "Heisei" series. Even though this was a new launch, a number of veteran Godzilla staffers were in charge of the production, including producer Tomiyuki Tanaka, who had produced every film since the first; director Koji Hashimoto, who served as an assistant director to Ishiro Honda; and visual effects director Teruyoshi Nakano, who was trained by Eiji Tsuburaya.

Nakano's return to helm the visual effects ushers in a modern aesthetic complementing the era of the 1980s. It would be his final involvement after he began in 1962 with **KING KONG VS. GODZILLA**, and taking up the baton from him would be his old colleague and protégé Koichi Kawakita. Kawakita would go on to revolutionize the Big G for the 1990s with **GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE** (1989).

Taking over the role of **GODZILLA** for this film is Kenpachiro Satsuma, who had previously played Hedorah and Gigan in the two subsequent films opposite original Godzilla actor Haruo Nakajima. Satsuma would go on to develop "Godzilla Kempo" (his own marital arts technique for essaying the role) and continue as the main monster through **GODZILLA VS. DESTROYAH** (1995).

THE RETURN OF GODZILLA is a somber and contemplative film in its original form. Once again, nuclear weapons are at the forefront of the story. This time, however, it is not only Godzilla that is to be feared, but also the politics of men representing those who have forgotten

the devastation wreaked upon Japan in the past, and the desire to use such weapons to save their own skins.

Immediately imported by Roger Corman's New World Pictures as **GODZILLA 1985**, Raymond Burr was

example, in the Japanese version there is a scene involving a covert Soviet commander attempting to stop an orbital nuclear missile from launching, while the American version goes for the Reagan Era "evil empire" point-of-view and instead has him *pushing* the launch button—

drastically altering the intent of the scene and the message of the film (of course, it didn't put the Soviets under a good light, either).

Although he panned the film, a **GODZILLA 1985** poster was featured prominently on the wall of Roger Ebert's office during the opening credits for the weekly review show **SISKEL & EBERT AT THE MOVIES** (1986-2010). The differences in the two versions of the film were also reflected during award seasons in 1986—Japan Academy Awards: Best Special Effects for Nakano and Newcomer of the Year for Yasuko Sawaguchi, and the US's Razzie Awards: Worst Supporting Actor for Raymond Burr and Worst New Star for the new computerized Godzilla.

—David E. Chapple



**WHEN MANKIND FALLS INTO CONFLICT
WITH NATURE, MONSTERS ARE BORN.**

THE RETURN OF GODZILLA

Gojira, 1984, 103 minutes

Director KOJI HASHIMOTO Executive Producer TOMIYUKI TANAKA Screenplay SHUICHI NAGAHARA Cinematography KATSUTAMI HARA Music REIJIRO KOROKU Visual Effects Director TERUYOSHI NAKANO
KEN TANAKA (Gara Maki) YASUKO SAWAGUCHI (Naoko Okumura) YOSUKE NATSUKI (Dr. Hayashida) KEJU KOBAYASHI (Prime Minister Mita) SHIN TAKUMA (Hiroshi Okumura) HIROSHI KOIZUMI (Minami) KEI SATO (Gonda)

1989 GODZILLA VS BIOLLANTE

Taking place immediately after the destruction of Tokyo in 1984's **GODZILLA** (released stateside the following year as **GODZILLA 1985**), **BIOLLANTE** opens with the military finding a piece of Godzilla's skin in the rubble. With this discovery, it is hoped that a detailed understanding of the monster—how he regenerates himself, absorbs radioactivity, etc.—will be found.

Meanwhile, Dr. Shiragami is working in the Middle Eastern republic of Saradia to develop a type of super-plant that can survive in the harshest environmental conditions. Outside forces, however, are

determined to sabotage this research, and in the midst of the chaos, Shiragami's daughter is killed. Grief-stricken, Shiragami splices the DNA of his daughter with that of her favorite roses, as well as the aforementioned Godzilla cells. The result leads to the birth of Godzilla's first new enemy since 1975's **TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA**: the colossal plant-Godzilla hybrid Biollante.

Though technically the second in the "Heisei" series of Godzilla films (after **GODZILLA 1985**), many fans consider this the first in what would be a nearly annual series of Godzilla films that would last until

1995. As the previous entry in the series was more or less a reboot of the original 1954 film, it was really this particular production that set a blueprint for the films to follow. The blueprint would prove to be so rigid that subsequent entries in the series would follow the structure of this film perhaps too closely. Take, for example, the psychic character of Miki Saegusa. A fan favorite, her character works well enough here, predicting when or where Godzilla might appear; but in later entries, she would be shoehorned into the plot, whether her character was necessary (**GODZILLA VS. DESTROYAH**) or not (1993's



GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE

Gojira buiesu Biollante, 1989, 104 minutes

Director KAZUKI OMORI Executive Producer SHOGO TOMIYAMA Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Original Story SHINICHIRO KOBAYASHI Cinematographer YUDAI KATO Music KOICHI SUGIYAMA Visual Effects Director KOICHI KAWAKITA KUNHIKO MITAMURA [Kazuhiro Kirishima] YOSHIKO TANAKA [Asuka Okauchi] MASANOBU TAKASHIMA [Major Kunaki] MEGUMI ODAKA [Miki Soegusa] TORU MINEGISHI [Goro Ganda] KOJI TAKAHASHI [Dr. Shiragami] RYUNOSUKE KANEDA [Seida Okauchi] YASUOKO SAWAGUCHI [Erika Shiragami]

GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA II), BIOLLANTE would also set a precedent for characters just standing around watching giant beasts battle rather than having more of a hand in the story as it unfolds, as characters in the earlier Honda-Tsuburaya adventures did.

You have to give credit to the staff for creating such a visually arresting enemy for Godzilla to grapple with, even if Biollante is so damn huge the operators can barely seem to move him. The Godzilla suit itself looks okay for the most part, with brown pupils replacing the traditional white, although the water scenes show the suit absorbing so much water the Big G actually looks like he's been juicing on steroids.

One problem with the film is that it takes itself far too seriously. There is a non-stop parade of scientific jargon masking itself as plausible reality. BIOLLANTE also populates the narrative with so many characters that at times it becomes increasingly difficult to tell what their

motivations are. Younger audiences must have been squirming in their theater seats.

The cast is lead by Kunihiko Mitamura, a famous singer and actor, who made his debut in 1980 and married his co-star, Mari Nakayama from Ishiro Honda's LATITUDE ZERO. He also appeared as Ayana's father in Shusuke Kaneko's GAMERA 3: REVENGE OF IRIS (1999). Yoshiko Tanaka, an intensely likable actress who won an acting award for Shohei Imamura's BLACK RAIN in 1989, plays the female lead. Rounding out the cast is the Megumi Odaoka as the aforementioned psychic Miki. She would return in the next five sequels, giving the audience a familiar character to identify with. Cameos from earlier Showa actors would be the norm in the coming years; here we have Katsuhiko Sasaki from 1973's GODZILLA VS. MEGALON and TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA in a small role as the Director of Science Technology (he would have larger role in 1991's GODZILLA VS. KING

GHIDORAH). Tadao Takashima from 1962's KING KONG VS. GODZILLA and 1967's SON OF GODZILLA would pass the "Godzilla torch" to both his sons, first here with his younger son Masanobu (his older brother, Masahiro, would headline 1993's GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA).

The music, by Koichi Sugiyama, has its defenders. But in comparison to Akira Ifukube's classic themes (which may be an unfair comparison), it's a mess—too electronic in a series that thrived on orchestral themes (including the underrated score for RETURN OF GODZILLA by Reijiro Koroku), and at other times, too John Williams-esque. A few Ifukube cues are a welcome addition.

While BIOLLANTE is a divisive film among fans, I think it has aged a little better than other films in the Heisei Series. It was at least popular enough to open the door for Godzilla to remain on Japanese movie screens for several years.

—Jason Varney

1991: GODZILLA VS KING GHIDORAH

Godzilla returned with a vengeance in 1991 to fight his most popular opponent, King Ghidorah. With the stunt casting of Yoshio Tsuchiya and Kenji Sahara and the return of Akira Ifukube to score the film, what could go wrong?

Opening with a UFO appearing over Tokyo, the film begins as Japan finds that a trio of people from the future have been sent back from the year 2204 to warn us that Godzilla will soon awaken, and immediate steps need to be taken to ensure Japan's survival. Their solution: travel back to the closing years of the war, find a dinosaur that eventually morphs into Godzilla, and remove it from history. This plan succeeds; however, our future allies turn out to have malevolent plans of their own, and place three "Dorats" in the dinosaur's place. Guess what these three cuddly critters become?

Kazuki Omori returned to the director's chair for this film, and he seems to have a better understanding of what made the earlier films popular to begin with. The characters here are extremely likable. The monster scenes are handled well enough, but there is an unfortunate tendency to matte actual cityscapes in the foreground with the monsters walking or flying in the background—showing people and traffic going about their business, blissfully unaware of the monster rampaging only a few blocks away. Or are they just accustomed to weekly *kaiju* occurrences?

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the monstrous plot holes in the story. If Godzilla is gone from history, why does everyone know who he is? What happens to those who died in Godzilla's attacks on Tokyo in 1954 (or Osaka in 1989)? Omori doesn't care to answer these questions, and anyone looking for answers is wasting their time.

Godzilla grows in size due to the stronger atmospheric radioactivity in the '90s, which allows Omori to put Godzilla in the Shinjuku scenes without being dwarfed by the skyscrapers. Unfortunately, this means the models are less detailed than before. King Ghidorah's design is moderately successful, though in some scenes it looks like someone lost control of the piano wires



controlling his heads. There is also little effort put into flapping his wings, making the suspension of belief that something so massive could fly rather difficult.

As Eiji Tsuburaya's successor, Koichi Kawakita was obviously a fan of creatures that evolve or transform. To some degree, every opponent of Godzilla here on in would have that ability. Ghidorah is no exception, as we are introduced to Mecha-King Ghidorah in the finale of this film.

With a fan favorite Godzilla enemy, an engaging cast, an exciting Ifukube score, and a loopy all-but-the-kitchen-sink story, GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH, despite numerable problems, remains one of the more entertaining entries of the Heisei series.

—Jason Varney

GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH
Gojira buisus Kingu Gidora, 1991, 103 minutes

Director KAZUKI OMORI Executive Producer
TOMIYAMA Screenplay KAZUKI OMORI
Cinematographer YOSHINORI SAKIGUCHI Music
AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects Director KOICHI
KAWAKITA
ANINA NAKAGAWA (Emmy Kana) KOSUKE
TOYOHARA (Kenichiro Terasawa) KIWAKO
HARADA (Chiaki Marimura) KATSUHIKO SASAKI
(Professor Masaki) YOSHIO TSUCHIYA (Yasuaki
Shinda) KENJI SAHARA (Prime Minister Takayuki
Segawa) TOKUMA NISHIOKA (Takehito Fujita)
SHOJI KOBAYASHI (Yuzo Debasahi) RICHARD
BERGER (Grenchika) CHUCK WILSON (Wilson)
ROBERT SCOTT FIELD (M-11)

1992 GODZILLA & MOTHRA THE BATTLE FOR EARTH

Finding success with the revival of past Godzilla foes (King Ghidorah the previous year), 1992 saw the revival of Mothra. This turned out to be a good decision, as GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA (or GODZILLA AND MOTHRA: THE BATTLE FOR EARTH as it was christened when it finally hit Stateside—straight to video and cable) was the biggest box office success since KING KONG VS. GODZILLA in 1962.

The film is more or less a remake of 1964's MOTHRA VS. GODZILLA, with the addition of an extra monster called Batta, a sort of crankier version of Mothra whose job is to defend Earth's ecology from the folly of man. We have the Cosmos, the '90s version of Twin Fairies from the earlier Mothra films, with Mothra and Batta teaming up at the end of the film to topple Godzilla, who is awakened by a meteorite that conveniently crashes near where he was sleeping at the bottom of the Pacific.

First, the bad: Screenwriter Kazuki

O m o r i ,
shamelessly
ripping off

the Terminator films the year before in GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH, starts the film off with another straight rip-off of an American film—this time going the Indiana Jones route. Another problem is the outright wasting of Akira Takarada's character. As delightful as it is to see our favorite actors from the Showa Era of Toho films, Takarada rarely gets to do anything but stare at the action on a huge monitor and make glum comments about the events that are unfolding (recalling Burr in GODZILLA 1985). Yoshio Tsuchiya was much better used the year before. Shoji Kobayashi, another familiar face (from ULTRAMAN), is given roughly the same treatment. The worst part is the absurd preachiness of the environmental themes, with several characters beating the audience over the head with how we are mistreating Mother Earth.

On a positive note, however, the film is never boring. From the opening Indiana Jones scenes in the Philippines, we quickly head out to Infant Island, and then back to Japan where the monster attacks and battle with Godzilla commences. Batta

and Mothra are also well designed for this new generation, although Mothra, in larval form, doesn't have the movements of the '60s films and looks like it is simply being pushed through the sets. Still, the miniature scenes look great, and there is plenty of destruction to enjoy. Akira Ifukube reworks some themes from the earlier Mothra films and his score, as always, is lovely.

Tetsuya Bessho and Satomi Kobayashi are two of the more appealing leads of the Heisei Series. Their bickering divorced couple is of the better-written characters for a Godzilla movie. Saburo Shinoda (of ULTRAMAN TARO-fame) also makes an appearance here—eagle-eyed viewers may remember his “blink and you'll miss it” appearance as a boy scout in 1968's GAMERA VS. VIRAS. Megumi Odaka's Miki is back again, of course, but this time she has absolutely nothing to do.

Though the “Save the Earth” message can be tiring, incoming director Takao Okawara made a crowd-pleasing entry in the series, and though it may not be the best in the Heisei Series, it's still moderately entertaining.

—Jason Varney

GODZILLA AND MOTHRA: THE BATTLE FOR EARTH
Gojira taiasu Mothra, 1992, 102 minutes

Director TAKAO OKAWARA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Producer SHOGO TOMIYAMA Screenplay KAZUKI OMORI Cinematographer MASAHITO KISHIMOTO Music AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects Director KOICHI KAWAKITA TETSUYA BESSHO (Takiya Fujita) SATOMI KOBAYASHI (Masaka Tezuka) TAKEHIRO MURATA (Kenji Ando) MEGUMI ODAKA (Miki Saegusa) SHIRO YONEZAWA (Midori Tezuka) AKIRA TAKARADA (Jiji Minamino) SABURO SHINODA (Professor Fukazawa) SHOJI KOBAYASHI (Yuza Dabashi) SAYAKA OSAWA & KEIKO IMAMURA (The Cosmos)

1993 GODZILLA VS MECHAGODZILLA II



After successes with *Mothra* and *King Ghidorah* before, was it any surprise that the next *Godzilla* entry from Toho would bring back *Mechagodzilla*?

Using technology from the leftovers of *Mecha-King Ghidorah*, mankind develops a super weapon called *Mechagodzilla*. Meanwhile, a paleontological expedition to an island in the Bering Sea discovers a prehistoric egg, as well as a '90s version of *Rodan* protecting it. The expedition is able to get the egg back to Japan for research while *Rodan* grapples with *Godzilla*. Back in Japan, the egg hatches, and out pops a baby *Godzilla*, with psychic links not only

to *Godzilla*, but *Rodan* as well.

Though not as successful as the previous year's *GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA*, *MECHAGODZILLA* still performed well, selling over 3,800,000 tickets in Japan. *Rodan* is a welcome addition to the film, though his appearance sometimes seems out of place.

It was a big risk to throw a baby *Godzilla* into the series, as *Minilla* was never all that popular. However, the baby *Godzilla*'s relationship with *Azusa* is moving, and their farewell near the end of the film is one of the most tender moments in the entire *Godzilla* series. The character always hovers near being mawkish without ever

really crossing that line.

The absolute highlight of the film has to be Akira Ifukube's music. His theme for *Rodan* was always one of his most popular cues, and the orchestration is thrilling. Maybe even more so is his thunderous theme for *Mechagodzilla*—probably his most rousing march, period.

In keeping with golden of popular stars from Toho's *Golden Age*, Tadao Takashima from 1962's *KING KONG VS. GODZILLA* and 1963's *ATRAKON* makes a brief appearance. He gets to work with his son, Masahiro Takashima, who is well cast as our hero. Kenji Sahara also shows up, but doesn't have much to do. Megumi Odaka, as *Miki*, makes a little more sense here than in the previous entry, as she wrestles with her responsibility to eliminate *Godzilla*. Ryoko Sano is a bit of a flyweight as *Azusa*, but her maternal instinct towards *Baby Godzilla* gives the film an emotional depth not often seen in this genre.

GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA was originally supposed to be the end of the *Heisei* series—and was going to have *Godzilla* die at the climax—in order to make way for TriStar's own series of *Godzilla* films. The departure of director Jan de Bont (*TWISTER*) allowed Toho to produce two more films. But now that they had finally exhausted their supply of popular enemy monsters, the next two films in the series would see the creation of all-new villains, for better and for worse.

—Jason Varney

GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA II

Gojira busei Mekagojira, 1993, 107 minutes

Director TAKAO OKAWARA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Producer SHOGO TOMIYAMA Screenplay WAITARU MIMURA Cinematographer YOSHINORI SENGUCHI Music AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects Director KOICHI KAWAKITA
MASAHIRO TAKASHIMA (*Kazuma Aoki*) RYOKO SANO (*Azusa Gojo*) MEGUMI ODAKA (*Miki Saegusa*) DAJIRO HARADA (*Tokuya Sasaki*) YUSUKE KAWAZU (*Professor Omeel*) TADAO TAKASHIMA (*Hosono*) KENJI SAHARA (*Prime Minister Segawa*) AKIRA NAKAO (*General Tokaki Asa*) KOICHI UEDA (*General Hyodo*) SHELLEY SWEENEY (*Katherine Berger*)

1994: GODZILLA VS SPACE GODZILLA

After the failure of Mechagodzilla to defend Japan against the threat of Godzilla, the anti-kaiju organization G-Force devises new methods of defense. Using the robot technology of Mechagodzilla, a new giant automaton called M.O.G.U.E.R.A. (Mobile Operation Godzilla Universal Expert Robot Aero-type) is built. They also execute an experimental plan to control the beast through telepathic means. Dubbed the "T-Project", a device would be connected to Godzilla's neck and amplify the telepathic abilities of Miki Saegusa, allowing her to control the giant monster and thus keep him from attacking populated areas. However, industrial saboteurs plan to steal the device and kidnap Miki, giving them control of the monster king.

Meanwhile, a hideous clone of Godzilla is created when Godzilla's cells are sucked through a black hole in space and result in a Space Godzilla. After attacking Godzilla and imprisoning his son in an impenetrable crystal prison, the powerful Space Godzilla begins to assimilate the landscape of Japan to increase his power. Only the combined might of Godzilla and M.O.G.U.E.R.A. have any hope of defeating this invader from space.

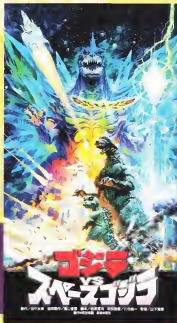
GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA took the Heisei series into more outlandish territory. The production marked the 40th anniversary of Godzilla's debut, but it was underwhelming compared to the previous entries. The title adversary was yet another variation on the doppelgänger theme, Biollante being a hybrid genetic offspring and Mechagodzilla being a robot in Godzilla's image. Coupled with such powers as flight with no apparent means of propulsion and an ability to generate crystal towers from the ground, the film pushed the boundaries of credibility—even for a Godzilla film. M.O.G.U.E.R.A. fared better in appearance, but didn't offer much besides barely moving his arms and firing a variety of beam and missile weapons. Created as an homage to the aliens' attack robot in *THE MYSTERIANS* (1957), "Mogera", this incarnation was also a nod

to the transforming/compound super robots like COMBATTLER V (1976) with its ability to divide into aerial and land attack vehicles (an idea originally conceived for the 1993 Mechagodzilla).

Despite the return of many key actors for the film, director Kensho Yamashita was new to the kaiju genre and had experience primarily in teen idol and romance movies. This is painfully obvious in the sunset-drenched "romance" scenes with Miki Saegusa and G-Force soldier Shindo. The special effects are also uneven, with the nadir being the obvious wire-suspended asteroids during the space battle between Space Godzilla and M.O.G.U.E.R.A.

—Mark Jaramillo

ADVENT of the GOD OF DESTRUCTION!



GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA
Gojira buiesu Supessu Gojira, 1994, 111 minutes

Director KENSHO YAMASHITA Executive Producer TOMOYUKI TANAKA Producer SHOGO TOMIYAMA
Screenplay HIROSHI KASHIWABARA Cinematography MASAHIRO KISHIMOTO Music TAKAYUKI
HATTORI Visual Effects Director KOICHI KAWAKITA
MEGLUMI ODAKA (Miki Saegusa) JUN HASHIZUME [Lieutenant Kaji Shinjii] ZENKICHI YONEYAMA
[Lieutenant Kyoshi Sato] AKIRA ENOCHI [Major Akira Yuki] TOWAKO YOSHIKAWA [Professor Chinatsu
Gondo] YOSUKE SAITO [Dr. Susumu Okubo] KENJI SAHARA [Prime Minister Segawa] AKIRA NAKAO
[General Aoe] KOICHI UEDA [General Hyodo] SAYAKA OSAWA and KEIKO IWAMURA [The Cosmos]

1995 GODZILLA VS DESTROYAH

During a routine surveillance of Birth Island, G-Force finds that the atoll is destroyed, and there are no signs of Godzilla or his son anywhere. The king of monsters reappears when he attacks Hong Kong, his torso glowing a pulsating red. It is theorized that the monster absorbed massive radiation from Uranium deposits beneath Birth Island, overloading his radioactive furnace, and causing an internal meltdown within his body. While

G-Force tries to find a solution to prevent Godzilla's impending meltdown from destroying Japan, human-sized crustacean creatures appear in Tokyo Bay and are fought off by the military. To the horror of everyone, it is discovered that the creatures are the byproduct of the lingering effects of the Oxygen Destroyer, which killed the original Godzilla in 1954.

Having the ability to combine into larger versions, the creatures, dubbed "Destroyah" after the weapon that created them, attack Godzilla and appear to be defeated. Little Godzilla reappears in the ocean, having grown to nearly the size of his father. Renamed "Godzilla Junior", he is lured to Tokyo to fight Destroyah when the crustacean beast reappears. Destroyah flies with Junior into the sky and drops him to his death. Infuriated, Godzilla attacks Destroyah and engages in a brutal battle with his son's killer. As Godzilla's internal temperature nears a critical level, Destroyah is dispatched by the military. Godzilla then begins to melt down, consumed by his own energy, flooding the city with radiation. Inexplicably, the radiation levels begin to immediately drop, absorbed by the corpse of the fallen Junior, who is reborn as a new adult Godzilla...

After a few attempts at ending the series, Toho followed through with GODZILLA

VS. DESTROYAH. Decreasing box office revenue resulted in Toho deciding to put Godzilla on a planned 10-year hiatus, intent on letting Sony/Tri-Star continue the series with their American remake that had been in development since 1993. A huge publicity campaign ensued in Japan that caught worldwide attention (including a feature story on CNN). In the ultimate spoiler, the movie posters proclaimed "Godzilla Dies" as the catch phrase. The resulting spotlight was enough to increase the box office for the film, but not change the enforced retirement.

GODZILLA VS. DESTROYAH ended the Heisei series on high note, returning to the message of the long-standing effects of man-made weapons of mass destruction. Actress Momoko Kuchi reprised her role as Emiko Yamane from the original GODZILLA, bringing the saga full circle, and serving as a connection to the events of 1954 film. Also adding to the nostalgia factor was the return of Akira Ifukube in his final film score; his "Requiem" being a fitting, heartbreaking theme for the dramatic onscreen death of Godzilla. The monsters look excellent—the design for Junior abandoned all influences of Minilla, and instead appears as a smaller, more dinosaurian version of the parent. Destroyah himself was presented as a walking apocalypse, instilling a true sense of fear and finality to the Heisei Series.

—Mark Jaramillo



GODZILLA VS. DESTROYAH

Gojira buiesu Desutoroiya, 1995, 103 minutes

Director TAKAO OKAWARA Executive Producer

TOMOYUKI TANAKA Producer SHOGO

TOMIYAMA Screenplay KAZUHI OIMORI

Cinematography YOSHINORI SEKIGUCHI Music

AKIRA IFUKUBE Visual Effects Director KOICHI

KAWAKITA

YASUFUMI HAYASHI (Kenichi Yamane) YOKO

ISHINO (Yukari Yamane) MEGUMI ODAKA

(Waki Saegusa) TAKURO TATSUMI (Kensaku

Juin) AKIRA NAKAO (General Asa) SABURO

SHINODA (Professor Fukuzawa) MOMOKO

KOCHI (Emiko Yamane)

1998

GODZILLA

1998 was a full year for big budget blockbusters, and competition was stiff. One of the films that Emmerich's *GODZILLA* would go head to head with was Michael Bay's disaster epic *ARMAGEDDON*. In 2014, that matchup will be repeated when Gareth Edwards' American remake goes head to head with Bay's *TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION*, opening the following month. The *Godzilla*/Bay connection doesn't stop there, however, as veteran voice actor Frank Welker (Megatron in the original *Transformers* cartoon) supplied the creature voices in Emmerich's *GODZILLA*, and provides multiple voices in Bay's live action *Transformers* epics.

Some years after multiple nuclear bomb tests in French Polynesia, an unknown force sinks a Japanese fishing tanker... Later, while researching irradiated earthworms in Chernobyl, biologist Niko Tatopoulos is enlisted by the American military to help in their investigation of the remnants of another attack in Panama. Finding himself standing in deep footprints, he determines that a large radioactive creature perpetrated the attack. The creature makes

its way to Manhattan, where it skillfully evades the military, bringing down many iconic skyscrapers. Tatopoulos determines that the creature, now dubbed *Godzilla* by an arrogant and opportunistic reporter, is an irradiated iguana, and by examining its blood via home pregnancy tests, determines it is attacking fishing vessels and fish markets in order to gather food for its coming offspring. He advises the military to focus on finding the nest, but he is dismissed. The French Secret Service, who want to keep their part in the origin of the creature a secret, kidnap Tatopoulos to help them find the nest before it's too late.

Three years after the Japanese film *GODZILLA VS. DESTROYAH*, America got its shot at the iconic creature. Unfortunately, the film Devlin and Emmerich made has more in common with the American radiation-soaked monster-on-the-loose pictures from the 1950s than with its Japanese counterparts. Also, the film is devoid of any of the social commentary found in the best of those films, let alone *GODZILLA*, and most of the beats are played for comedy, as the weapons of the "gang who couldn't shoot

straight" military are easily evaded by the fleet-footed leviathan. The fact that the laughable armed forces are no match for the creature diminishes the danger and gravitas posed by *Godzilla*. Consequently, the destruction is played more for comedy than trauma, as the inept humans decimate most of the city, not the wily and scaly "Buster Keaton", no matter what they try. Emmerich's irritating epic is also chock full of shallow and annoying characters that the audience could care less about, which results in a loud and soulless film with ultimately nothing to say.

Two scenes in particular sum up Emmerich and Devlin's film: holed up in a hotel, a French Secret Service Agent hands a cup of coffee to Jean Reno's character. After taking a sip, his face sours and asks, "You call this coffee?" The agent shrugs his shoulders and says, "I call it America." Subsequently, the same agent hopefully brandishes a bag of coffee labeled "French Roast". They both shake their heads. I guess you could say that this is the *café au lait* of *Godzilla* movies.

—David E. Chapple

GODZILLA (1998), 139 minutes

Director ROLAND EMMERICH Producer DEAN DEVLIN Screenplay DEAN DEVLIN and ROLAND EMMERICH Cinematography UELI STEIGER Music DAVID ARNOLD
Godzilla Designer and Supervisor PATRICK TATOPOULUS
 MATTHEW BRODERICK (Dr. Niko Tatopoulos) JEAN RENO (Philippe Roache) MARIA PATILLO (Audrey Timmonds) HANK AZARIA (Victor "Animal" Palotti) KEVIN DUNN (Colonel Hicks) MICHAEL LERNER (Mayor Ebert) HARRY SHEARER (Charles Calman) ARABELLA HEID (Lucy Palotti) DOUG SAWANT (Sergeant O'Neil)

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GODZILLA 2000

MILLENNIUM ERA 2000-2004

A small contingent of the global Godzilla Prediction Network has assembled sensory equipment on the Japanese coast to detect any landfalls when the Godzilla himself rises from the ocean in front of them. As Godzilla makes his way across the countryside, the GPN alerts the Defense Force to his sudden appearance. Meanwhile, deep in the undersea Japan Trench, a scientific entity known as Crisis Control Intelligence discovers a large boulder emanating an energy signature. Using balloons (!) to float the gigantic rock to the surface for study, the boulder surprises everyone by floating unnaturally on the surface.

Godzilla is attacked by the military with a barrage of Full Metal Missiles, which are designed to penetrate bunkers, and hopefully, Godzilla's hide. The attack is interrupted by the strange rock, which has flown under its own power to Godzilla, who is scanned by the intelligence within. Godzilla blasts the boulder with his atomic ray, exposing the spaceship hidden by the rocky façade.

After a brief battle, Godzilla submerges

and the spaceship flies to Tokyo, where it perches atop a business tower and hacks the computers inside for information on Godzilla. The aliens are after a regenerative component in Godzilla's DNA called Organizer G-I, which they intend to utilize to recreate their physical bodies, and begin a new civilization on Earth. Godzilla enters the city and destroys the spacecraft, but the aliens employ DNA retrieved from Godzilla to configure themselves into Orga, a giant alien creature with huge claws and a shoulder mounted energy cannon. Orga attempts to consume Godzilla and assimilate him into its body, but Godzilla unleashes a blast from his atomic ray inside the mutant creature, blasting the invader apart from the inside. In an act of defiance or disdain for humanity, Godzilla proceeds to use his atomic ray to set the surrounding area ablaze.

GODZILLA 2000 was an unexpectedly early return for Toho's Godzilla. Originally intended to be in retirement for at least 10 years after GODZILLA VS. DESTROYAH (1995), the universal disappointment with

TriStar's GODZILLA (1998) prompted Toho to bring back the king of monsters to salvage his reputation and reclaim his name. This new series of films basically rebooted the character, ignoring all of the previous entries save the original. Godzilla's design was also revamped, becoming smaller than his Heisei incarnation. He appeared more reptilian and sported larger, spiky dorsal plates. The enemy monster Orga is a strange design, appearing as a mutated hybrid of Godzilla and the alien anatomy. The ending provided a humbling epitaph for humanity as Godzilla reigned supreme in the middle of a flaming city.

GODZILLA 2000 also had the distinction of being the first Godzilla film in 15 years to have a wide release to American theaters. The ensuing series consisted of self-contained films that had stand-alone stories (except for the "Kiryu Saga") that were direct sequels to the 1954 original, each contained within its own universe. Enough time had passed, and the real Godzilla was back.

—Mark Jaramillo



GODZILLA 2000

Godzilla Nisori nen Mireinamu,
1999,
107 minutes

Director TAKAO OKAWARA
Executive Producer SHOGO
TOMIYAMA Screenplay
HIROSHI KASHIWABARA
and WATARU MIKURA
Cinematography KATSUHIRO
KATO Music TAKAYUKI
HATTORI Visual Effects
Supervisor KENJI SUZUKI
Takehiro MURATA Yuji
Shinoda Naohi NISHIDA
(Yuki Ichinose) SHIRO SANO
(Shiro Miyasaka) HIROSHI
(Mitsuo Kato) MAYU SUZUKI
(Jo Shinoda)

Witness the New
GODZILLA MILLENNIUM!



GODZILLA VS. MEGAGUIRUS

Gojira tai Megagirasu JI Showaetsu Sukusen, 2001, 105 minutes

Director MASAOKI TEZUKA Executive Producer SHOGO TOMIYAMA Screenplay WATARU MINURA and HIROSHI KAWASHIURA Cinematography MASAHIRO KISHIMOTO Music MICHIRU OSHIMA Visual Effects Director KENJI SUZUKI

MISATO TANAKA (Kiriko Tsujimori) SHOSUKE TANIHARA (Hajime Kudo) MASATO IBU (Watarika Sugiyara) YURIKO HOSHI (Yoshino Yoshitawa) TOSHIYUKI NAGASHIMA (Takuru Miyagawa) KAZUKO KATO (Kaoru Hayasaka) YUSAKU YARA (Narrator)

Since the day Godzilla first attacked, Japan has lived in fear of the great kaiju, even outlawing nuclear power for fear of attracting the beast. In response, the organization dubbed G-Graspers is formed, commanded by the vengeful Kiriko Tsujimori. However, when they create a weapon designed for nothing less than firing a literal black hole at Godzilla, their initial test run tears a hole in the fabric of reality, and brings a new threat

into our world—vicious prehistoric insects called Meganula, which seek to feed on humanity... and the Monster King! Now Tsujimori and the G-Graspers have to contend with both Godzilla and the Queen of the Meganula: Megaguirus!

After the moderate success of GODZILLA 2000, Toho saw fit to follow up with a sequel, continuing their “experimentation” process of the new “Millennium” series. GODZILLA VS.

2000 GODZILLA VS MEGAGUIRUS

MEGAGUIRUS attempts to both try some new, bolder story elements and also draw in classic kaiju fans by utilizing a little-known character from the Toho films of yore—the Meganulons. These giant dragonfly larvae initially appeared as antagonists (and later a monster snack food) in RODAN (1956). The new film cleverly explores the idea of the completed lifecycle for the insects, even giving them an extra kick-in-the-pants so that the monstrous queen can take on Godzilla head-to-head.

GODZILLA VS. MEGAGUIRUS is the sort of film where the whole is not as solid as the sum of its parts; there are great set pieces throughout the feature, and the overall sense of world-building (particularly the “colorful” G-Graspers and their array of nifty toys for fighting monsters) call to mind an Ultraman-style universe of possibility. Unfortunately, the narrative structure leaves one feeling as though it never quite lives up to its potential. In fact, the enemy kaiju feels completely tacked-on, as Godzilla himself is constantly recognized as the true antagonist, whereas the offending insects are little more than an afterthought—a foe thrown in to give Godzilla something to smack around.

The visual effects are uneven, especially for Megaguirus herself, who looks great when flying at high-speed or in close-ups, but spends too much time hanging awkwardly in mid-air.

Sadly, despite relatively strong praise from fans, MEGAGUIRUS was the lowest-grossing Godzilla film in the series to that point. Toho was unsure if the series would continue past the next film. Using less obscure kaiju for the next installment may have saved the franchise from early retirement.

—Matt Frank



2001 GODZILLA, MOTHRA, KING GHIDORAH GIANT MONSTERS ALL-OUT ATTACK

As time passes, even the mightiest legend will fade into the mists of time. Fear will give way to caution, caution will give way to indifference, and indifference will give way to mockery. Half a century since Godzilla laid waste to Tokyo, only Admiral Tachibana pushes for the modern military hierarchy to remember, and prepare, for the day when the God of Destruction might cast his shadow over Japan once more. When he does finally rise to strike at an unprepared populace, the Guardians of Yamato—Baragon, God of Earth; Mothra, God of Water; and Ghidorah, God of the Sky—emerge to combat the vengeful kaiju.

After achieving critical acclaim with his trilogy of Gamera films in the late 1990s, Shūsuke Kaneko could finally step in and direct his own Godzilla epic. The concept for the film eventually materialized as a story that would star a completely villainous Godzilla and a host of smaller, less-powerful monsters needed to unite their efforts to defeat him. Initially, Kaneko planned to utilize fan-favorites Anguirus, Baragon, and Varan to battle the Monster King. Yet Toho, ever mindful of the decreasing profitability of the franchise after the under-performing *GODZILLA VS. MEGAGUIRUS*, requested that the film feature Godzilla's two most popular adversaries: Mothra and King Ghidorah. Kaneko capitulated, though he made a case to keep at least one monster from the original cast, and settled on the scrappy, adorable Baragon. For the film, Godzilla himself was once again overhauled. The edgy design of the Millennium Godzilla was supplanted in favor of a more classic-looking monster heavily

inspired by the designs from the early Showa films. This new Godzilla was intended to appear as an engine of pure destructive force. To top it all off, Godzilla was given eyes that were nearly totally white—no pupils to convey empathy—in order to create the impression of “blind rage.”

GMK is considered by many to be the best of the Millennium Godzilla series. The film benefits from not only spectacular effects and great-looking monsters, but a solid screenplay and great acting. Chiharu Niiyama's Yuri is a nicely layered protagonist—an earnest yet flawed young woman full of journalistic bravado, yearning for an identity of her own in the shadow of her distinguished father.

GMK also prospers from stratified symbolism that works to advance the narrative very well. Godzilla himself is more a monstrous walking metaphor than a literal mutant dinosaur, described as being driven by all of the angry souls of those who died in the Pacific War. It is the film's way of saying that Japan is in danger of forgetting the sacrifice, and the sins, of a war that shaped the nation's modern identity. The Yamato Guardians, on the other hand, represent Japan's spiritual and natural forces that govern the country in a mythical sense.

GMK pulled the franchise out of the box office doldrums, becoming the most profitable of any Millennium film. It may owe some of its success to the inclusion of more classic *kaiju*, as well as partnering with the new Hamaro animated film to boost ticket sales. Either way, the film was profitable enough to warrant more Godzilla features, and another classic foe



would challenge him in the following year!

—Matt Frank

GODZILLA, MOTHRA, KING GHIDORAH: GIANT MONSTERS ALL OUT ATTACK
Gojira Mothra Kingu Gidora Daikajin Sakotogeki, 2001, 105 minutes

Director SHUSUKE KANEKO Executive Producer SHOGO TOMIYAMA Screenplay KEIICHI HASEGAWA, SHUSUKE KANEKO and MASAHIRO YOKOTANI Cinematography MASAHIRO KISHIMOTO Music KOW OTANI Visual Effects Directors MAKOTO KAMIYA and SHINJI HIGUCHI CHIHARU NIIYAMA (Yuri Tachibana) RYUDO UZAKI (Taisa Tachibana) MASAHIRO KOBAYASHI (Tenzaki Takeda) SHIRO SANO (Haruki Kodokura) TAKASHI NISHINA (Aki Maruno) KAHU MINAMI (Kumi Emori), SHINYA OWADA (Katsumasa Mikumo) KUNIO MURAI (Masato Hinogaki) HIROYUKI WATANABE (Makoto Hirose) HIDEYO ANAMOTO (Hirotsugu Iizayama) YUKIHO HOSARI (Suicidal Man) AI MAEDA and AKI MAEDA (Tokushima Twins)

GODZILLA AGAINST MECHAGODZILLA

2002



Giant monsters and rogue mutations have terrorized Japan for many decades, but the nation has always survived and persevered. One fateful day, the mightiest and most terrifying returns to lay low the cities of man—Godzilla! A young tank commander, Akane Yashiro, makes a fatal mistake during the monster's rampage, and it costs the lives of her commanding officer and fellow troops. Removed from the field, she internalizes the pain of failure... until opportunity comes knocking. The JSDF has retrieved the bones of the original Godzilla from his resting place in Tokyo Bay. Their intention: to create a Mechanical Godzilla, dubbed "Kiryu," with Yashiro as the pilot!

GODZILLA AGAINST MECHAGODZILLA is the first film by a returning director in the Millennium Series, as Masaaki Tezuka once again takes the helm. This film also marks the fourth theatrical appearance of the Mechagodzilla character, here referred to as "Kiryu," meaning "Mechanical Dragon" (it is only referred to as "Mechagodzilla" by the character Sara, making it something of a nickname). One could argue that Kiryu is a decidedly different beast from the previous Mechagodzilla, given the rather complicated origin of the bio-machine when compared to its predecessors.

Functioning as yet another reboot, **GODZILLA AGAINST MECHAGODZILLA** was intended as a foundation for a new continuity. The film is breathlessly paced, featuring a relatively simple story about Yumiko Shaku's character coming to terms with the mistakes of her past. The father-daughter relationship between Yuhara (Shin Takuma) and Sara (Kana Onodera) is both endearing and amusing, but feels a little melodramatic at times. There is some interesting set-up in the story about how Japan has suffered monster attacks before, specifically citing events from both *MOTHRA* (1961) and *THE WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS* (1966).

Ultimately, the film feels a bit unfinished, as the driving concern over Kiryu's potential to run amok is tossed aside so that the script can allow its characters to achieve their respective arcs unhindered. Yet, taken in context that this is the first part of a two-part story, one can forgive the film in hindsight. The visual effects are suitably impressive, with some especially great composite work. The action sports some real showstoppers, notably the creative and dramatic conclusion of the final battle.

GODZILLA AGAINST MECHAGODZILLA managed to gross respectable business at the box office, though numbers were still dwindling. Kiryu himself would go on to become one of the most popular monsters in the Godzilla fandom thanks to his tumultuous back-story, and the "Kiryu Saga" would be concluded in the following year's film *GODZILLA: TOKYO SOS*.

—Matt Frank

GODZILLA AGAINST MECHAGODZILLA
Gojira tai Mekagojira, 2002, 88 minutes

Director MASAAKI TEZUKA Executive
Producer SHOGO TOMIYAMA
Screenplay WATARU MIMURA Music
MICHIRU OSHIMA Cinematographer
MASAHIRO KISHIMOTO Visual
Effects Director YUICHI KIKUCHI
YUMIKO SHAKU (Akane Yashiro)
SHIN TAKUMA (Takumitsu Yuhara)
KANA ONODERA (Sara Yuhara) KOH
TAKASUGI (Lt. Togashi) AKIRA NAKA
(Prime Minister Igarashi) YUSUKE
TOMOI (Lt. Hoyaama) KUMI MIZUNO
(Prime Minister Tsuge) MISATO
TANAKA (Tsujimari), HIDEKI MATSUI
(Hideki Matsui)





2003

GODZILLA TOKYO SOS

just a returning Godzilla (sporting a huge scar on his chest from the final battle of the previous film), but an upgraded Kiryu (wielding a wicked drill-hand). Most impressive of all is the wonderful new Mothra and her twin caterpillar children. These new versions of the kaiju are decidedly throwbacks to the classic interpretations from the 1960s, featuring more insectoid designs and significantly updated animatronics.

TOKYO SOS is arguably even faster paced than GODZILLA AGAINST MECHAGODZILLA. The film has a brief set-up, then it's almost entirely one massive battle from the second act onward. Yoshito (Noboru Kaneko, best known as the red ranger of GAORANGER from 2002) plays his youthful energy well, but the rest of the cast doesn't feel as well-formed, with exception to veteran actor Hiroshi Koizumi, reprising his role from the original MOTHRA.

At the end of the day, the film feels a bit formulaic, with major beats and story elements lifted almost entirely from past Toho films; and the finale feels like a near retread of the previous year's movie. Still, there are some nice elements at play, such as building on the previous film's established universe of monsters. There's even a cameo by Kamcebas, the giant turtle from YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE (1970). Visually, there are some true high points for the franchise at work here, such as Mothra herself. The moth-god is a wonder to behold, perhaps the best representation of the character since 1964. Several set pieces, such as the missile attack on Godzilla in Tokyo Bay, are truly spectacular.

Despite the best efforts of the studio, TOKYO SOS was another all-time low box-office earner for the Godzilla series. Many cited the poor performance to audience burnout, but Toho wasn't finished yet, as Godzilla's 50th anniversary was right around the corner.

—Matt Frank

Only a year prior, "Kiryu" had driven Godzilla from the shores of Japan. Now undergoing upgrades for the inevitable rematch, Kiryu is marveled over by young engineer Yoshito Chujo. However, while visiting his grandfather, Dr. Shinichi Chujo, Yoshito is reunited with old friends—the tiny twin priestesses of Mothra. The faeries request that Kiryu be dismantled and the original Godzilla's bones be returned to the sea. The government, however, is reluctant to destroy their greatest weapon.

Suddenly, Godzilla returns and storms through Tokyo! Yet the king of monsters is confronted by none other than Mothra herself. Meanwhile, the government must decide whether or not to launch Kiryu and risk the machine going wild again or let the monsters fight it out with Japan's fate in the balance. And what about Kiryu himself? What is his choice?

The fifth and final appearance of the Mechagodzilla character, TOKYO SOS is a true sequel to the previous year's GODZILLA AGAINST MECHAGODZILLA. Masaaki Tezuka returns for the third and final time to the director's chair, as does Michiru Oshima to the musical score. In this feature, audiences are treated to not

GODZILLA: TOKYO SOS

Gajiro to Masuro to Mekagajira Tokyo Eto O Eto, 2003, 91 minutes

Director MASAAKI TEZUKA Executive Producer SHOGO TOMIYAMA Screenplay MASAAKI TEZUKA and MASAHIRO YOKOTANI Cinematography YOSHINORI SEKIGUCHI Music MICHIRU OSHIMA Visual Effects Director EIICHI ASADA NOBORU KANEKO (Yoshito Chujo) MIHO YOSHIOKA (Azuza Kisoan) KATSUYA ONIZUKA (Kiyosuke Akiba) HIROSHI KOIZUMI (Shinichi Chujo) MASANAGASAWA and CHIHIRO OTSUKA (Twin Faeries) KOH TAKASUGI (Togashi) AKIRA NAKAO (Prime Minister Igarashi) YUWIKO SHAKU (Akane Yoshino) ITSUKI OMORI (Shun Chujo)

さらば、ゴジラ。

「MONSTER」の名を冠する映画は、
世界最大の怪獣を登場させる「ファンタジー・ホラー」映画。
46年「1954年」の「ゴジラ」から始まりました...

シリーズ50年の最大作 最高峰の怪獣戦争

GODZILLA

FINAL WARS

ゴジラ ファイナル ウォーズ

監督 北村龍平 主演 山崎貴子 香川 伸

製作 山崎貴子 脚本 三村 浩・山崎 貴子 特撮 佐藤 信太郎 監修 山崎 貴子

www.godzilla.co.jp



2004

GODZILLA FINAL WARS

During the 20th Century, humanity's wars and environmental destruction have unleashed many monsters upon the Earth. The human race unites against the colossal beasts that threaten to end our civilization, and the Earth Defense Force is founded. During a battle at the South Pole, the flying undersea battleship *Goten-go* (from the 1963 Toho classic *ATLANTIS*) struggles to survive an onslaught by the mightiest of the monsters, Godzilla. In a stroke of luck, an earthquake occurs that opens the earth and swallows up Godzilla into a deep crevasse. A young Ensign Gordon fires a barrage of missiles that buries Godzilla under tons of ice.

Forty years later, Captain Gordon now commands the new *Goten-go* against the kaiju. In the fight against the monsters, the EDF employs genetically gifted humans called "Mutants" to lead the charge against the monsters, dubbed the "M-Unit". While the M-Unit is repelling a kaiju attack, alien ships appear in the sky and seemingly vaporize the beasts. The aliens announce their intent to befriend humanity, and the world embraces the visitors from Planet X. However, Captain Gordon and members of the EDF are not convinced, and they publicly uncover the aliens' true plot to subjugate humanity using the kaiju and harvest human beings as their food source. As the monsters annihilate cities around the world, the crew of the *Goten-go* head to the South Pole to free the only thing powerful enough to stop the aliens: Godzilla. Once set loose, Godzilla traverses the globe, dispatching all of the alien-controlled monsters. Everything leads to a final showdown in which Godzilla, Mothra, and the *Goten-go* face off against the Planet X leader, Gigan, and Monster X (who transforms into Kaiser Ghidorah).

Godzilla's 50th anniversary once again saw Toho announcing another hiatus for the King of Monsters. For this particular farewell, they intended to outdo any Godzilla film that had come before it. A publicity campaign cryptically announced "Saraba, Gajira" (Farewell, Godzilla) and hinted that this would be the

King's final battle. As the details were slowly revealed to the public, the scope of the project had longtime fans excited. The film was to be directed by hot young director Ryuhai Kitamura (VERSUS) and would feature a huge cast of kaiju, in numbers that hadn't been seen since DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (1968). Old favorites such as Anguirus, Hedra, Gigan, and King Shisa were to return. Toho involved Keith Emerson, Sum 41, Kyle Cooper, and Don Frye to give the movie international appeal. GODZILLA FINAL WARS would have its World Premiere at the prestigious Chinese Theatre in Hollywood in conjunction with a Godzilla float in the Hollywood Christmas Parade, as well as a ceremony unveiling a star for the Big G on the internationally renowned Hollywood Walk of Fame.

In the end, GODZILLA FINAL WARS couldn't hold up to the hype. Fans were disappointed that the stellar cast of kaiju had fleeting screen time and were summarily glossed over for MATRIX-style fight scenes and music video-edited motorcycle chases. Many saw it as a wasted opportunity. GODZILLA FINAL WARS remains one of the most polarizing movies among fans, with opposite sides passionately praising or criticizing the final product. But it would prove to be only a ten-year hiatus for the Big G... Long live the King!

—Mark Jaramillo

GODZILLA FINAL WARS

Gojira Fainaru Uozu, 2004, 125 minutes

Director RYUHEI KITAMURA Executive Producer SHOHO TOMIYAMA Screenplay ISAO KIRIYAMA and WATARU MIMURA Cinematography TAKUMI FURUYA and FUJIO OKAWA Music KEITH EMERSON, DAISUKE YANO and NOBUHIRO MORINO Special Visual Effects Director EIICHI ASADA

MASAHIRO MATSUOKA (Shinichi Ozaki) REI KIKUKAWA (Miyuki Otonashi) DON FRYE (Douglas Gordon) KANE KOSUGI (Katsunari Kazama) MAKI MIZUNO (Anna Otonashi) KAZUKI KITAMURA (Xilian Regulator) KUMI MIZUNO (Akiko Namikawa) KENJI SAHARA (Hachiro Jingui) MASAKATSU FUNAJI (Commander Kumasaka) MASATO IBU (Xilian Commander) JUN KUNIMOTO (Major Kumoro) AKIRA TAKARADA (Naotaro Daigo)

A dramatic scene from the movie Godzilla, showing the massive monster towering over a city skyline at sunset. The city is in flames, and the monster's head is visible in the dark, silhouetted against the bright orange and yellow sky. The San Francisco skyline, including the Transamerica Pyramid, is visible in the background.

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

GODZILLA (2014), DIRECTOR GARETH EDWARDS RESTORES THE KING TO HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE

BY ED BLAIR

In 2010, a movie called *MONSTERS* grabbed a lot of attention for pulling off the seemingly impossible. The movie, produced on a shoestring budget with a crew numbering in the single digits, featured a couple trying to make their way home through a quarantined region of Mexico that had been overrun by giant alien invaders. The film featured stunning yet subtle CGI, as well as a story that sympathized with both humans and aliens and managed to be incredibly poignant. The man behind this low budget miracle was British director Gareth Edwards. Originally an FX artist, Edwards proved with his first feature that he had something original to bring to the big screen. It came as no surprise to people who had seen *MONSTERS* when Edwards was tapped to direct the new *GODZILLA* film from Warner Bros. and Legendary Pictures. *Godzilla* has always been a sympathetic creature that resonated with audiences. With Edwards' ability to weave humanity into seemingly mindless beasts and his background in FX, he was the perfect pick to return the King of Monsters to his throne. Edwards was kind enough to take some time out for *FM* to let us in on his trials and triumphs in creating *GODZILLA*.

Famous Monsters. Between your previous film *MONSTERS* and now *GODZILLA*, you're certainly staking a claim to the world of Sci-Fi and giant creature films. Growing up, what were the books/films/comics you were drawn to that ultimately inspired you creatively?

Gareth Edwards. I blame Spielberg and Joe Dante movies. When I was young I

always wanted to be visited by aliens like the kids in their movies. They raced around on BMXs and watched old Sci-Fi movies from the 50s and 60s. I had a BMX; I just needed a few B-movies on VHS and then maybe the aliens would come visit, right?! The problem was that these kind of old Sci-Fi movies were very rare in the shops in England, so I'd often have to wait until a

trip into the big city, where I'd go hang out at the only comic store for miles all day and buy everything I could afford—including *Famous Monsters of Filmland*!

Films I would watch to death were things like *FORBIDDEN PLANET*, *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, and original episodes of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*. I still believe *THE TWILIGHT*

ZONE is the best TV show ever made. It was so ahead of its time. For every "clever" Sci-Fi movie that comes out today, you can typically point at a Rod Serling episode that did something similar or better 50 years ago.

I have a really high tolerance for anything Sci-Fi from that era. I kind of use it as wallpaper at home when I'm working. For years doing visual effects, I'd just watch STAR TREK, LOST IN SPACE—THE OUTER LIMITS was in the background on loop while I worked. They aren't the kind of thing I'd put on if a friend came around; I know it's a very specific taste, but they make me feel like a kid again, like how I felt when I watched those Spielberg and Joe Dante films, when the adventure of your life is still in front of you and anything is possible. I find the childlike feelings that gives me very inspiring, to be honest. I guess I have issues with growing up.

FM. While it's one thing to be inspired by great storytelling, how did that translate for you into pursuing filmmaking and FX? Did you have any formal training?

GE. When it dawned on me that maybe the aliens were *not* going to visit, I started

to seriously embrace the idea of being a filmmaker. It was magazines like [FM] that are partly to blame. They would be full of behind the scenes photos and interviews, and slowly my interest went towards wanting to be like the filmmakers they interviewed. I remember being sent out of class for misbehaving when I was ten—and I spent the hour storyboarding a short film. So I must have known about directing back then and been interested in the idea of filmmaking.

From those same comic shops, I also bought a book called THE STEVEN SPIELBERG STORY, which explained that Spielberg made a short film, took it to Hollywood, and then got hired as a director at Universal. I naively based my whole career plan on that! I figured I'd go to film school, make a short film, and then Hollywood would call and I'd become a movie director.

Sadly, it didn't happen that way. I finished film school and could not get a job for love or money. But the one good thing that came out of it was that my flatmate Andre Howell was an animation student studying this new thing called "computer animation", and

it got me really excited. It seemed like the ultimate weapon for a wanna-be filmmaker. So I got a job stacking shelves at night and bought a computer. I figured I would learn 3D animation, and in six months, go make a film!

However, it took me nearly ten years to become any good at it. I got completely sidetracked in a career doing cheap CGI for television from my bedroom. I got so frustrated helping other directors make their films that I eventually quit my job and went out on a limb, trying to use my skills in making a low budget monster movie called MONSTERS.

FM. And that was a fantastic film that did so many things right. I loved the humanity of the story that gave depth and empathy to all the characters—aliens included. It also used a great minimalist style in the scares, keeping a lot of the threats just offscreen instead of shoving them down the viewers' throats. Was that always the plan, or was some of it a creative byproduct of having a smaller crew and budget?

GE. It's true that there was a limit to the number of effects I could do on the movie. I figured at the time, I had five months, and



Director Gareth Edwards with actor Ken Watanabe on the set of GODZILLA.



GODZILLA

if I did a shot a day that would give me 150 FX shots. In the end, I ended up with over 250 to do in the same time frame, so there was no way I could ever show a creature every five minutes of the movie. But to be honest, all my favorite films—all the great monster movies like *JAWS*, *ALIEN*, *THE*

THING, *JURASSIC PARK*—spend long periods of time teasing the audience, letting them use their imagination, a kind of cinematic foreplay that I definitely wanted to replicate.

FM. How was the transition moving from

MONSTERS, where the crew numbered in the single digits, to a production like *GODZILLA*, where there were hundreds of people running around on a daily basis? **GE.** I guess the biggest difference was that in *MONSTERS*, I was thinking of the shots about six seconds before I moved the camera and filmed them. On *GODZILLA*, I had to think of the shots six months before we even turned up on set. In some ways, this feels like it must result in a very different movie, but you're actually using the same part of your brain for both, so it's kind of irrelevant to the audience if you had the idea for the shot on the spur of the moment or a year earlier.

The production was very good at protecting me from all the chaos. I only really had about ten people I ever needed to speak to on set, and spent most of my time communicating everything through them. I kind of lived in a bubble. It was a couple of months into filming before I even discovered craft services! Much to my loss...

FM. The thing that struck me the most when I heard you had gotten the call for *GODZILLA* was that the original 1954 film and *MONSTERS* had so much in common. *GODZILLA* succeeded not just because it had a great monster, but because there was a tragedy to Godzilla's existence. There's no celebration at the end of that film when he perishes. *MONSTERS* was much the same way. Great Universal monsters like *Frankenstein's Monster* and *Creature from the Black Lagoon* all had tragic existences often forced on them by humanity. What was your thinking when approaching *Godzilla* as a character?

GE. I think the biggest difference between me today and me at the start of production is that now I feel like I've actually *met* *Godzilla*. I didn't know him when we started. He was an abstract, iconic character that revealed his personality to us over the process of making the film. To start with, I thought we would just have his animation on animal behavior. We gathered hundreds of clips of bears fighting, wolves hunting, etc.; but soon realized that there is a reason that all natural history documentaries have narration; because animals are not very good storytellers, and you often don't know what they're thinking or feeling during a conflict. We had to dial in more human characteristics so we could empathize and understand *Godzilla* better.



ABOVE: Godzilla makes his way through the mists as he prepares to unleash his vengeance. **RIGHT:** Ken Watanabe searches for clues as to the origins of this mysterious beast. **BELOW:** Aaron Taylor-Johnson as a soldier tasked with finding a way to defeat the monster.





FM. Of course, the big question from the get-go was "What will Godzilla look like?" The design of the creature really is integral to the film. What were your initial ideas as to how he should look? How long would you say that it took from when you first started working on the design to when you arrived at the final version we see now?

GE. The design process probably lasted a whole year from start to finish. The initial brief that I gave to the designers was, imagine this was a real animal that really exists, and 60 years ago some people in Japan witnessed him coming out of the ocean and ran to Toho Studios describing what they saw. Toho then did their best interpretation of this, to create the "Guy in a Suit" Godzilla that we all know and love. But in our film we will finally get to see the *real* animal, and as a result he can look cooler; but you still understand how they interpreted the eyewitness descriptions to come up with the previous design.

FM. The final version looks like a great blend of classic Godzilla with some

updates, like a flattened head that has a very predator/pitbull feel about it. Were there any details that kept hanging up the design process? Did you find yourself sitting in a room full of green paint swatches for days on end trying to find that perfect shade of Godzilla?

GE. Like all things, the face was the most important. We tried over a hundred different designs and stole a lot from nature. I feel that we landed on something that was a mix between a bear, a dog, and an eagle. The main difference, I think, between ours and the Japanese versions is that we straightened a lot of the lines to make him look more aggressive. I think there's something potentially cute about rounded, curved heads and snouts, which I was trying to avoid.

FM. What kinds of challenges did you face in not only tackling a classic story, but one that is uniquely foreign and was born of a distinctly Japanese cultural experience? How did you mix east/west and contemporary/classic?

GE. We were very literal about it, in that this is a Japanese icon that we are bringing to America; so I wanted the story to be a global journey that started in Japan and ended up in America. I also wanted some of the film to reference or be set in 1954. The biggest problem was how to create a scenario where Godzilla magically appeared in our world. Everything we came up with seemed too absurd. Surely it's more realistic that he always existed, but then we would have found him by now—unless we *did* find him. As soon as the submarines could go to those depths, we discovered him. What if all those nuclear tests in the 50s weren't tests, but they were trying to kill him? As soon as we came up with that, it felt like a good foundation on which to build our story.

FM. Casting for Godzilla became a spectator sport as names trickled out. From Bryan Cranston and Ken Watanabe to Aaron Taylor-Johnson, the cast is very eclectic with a great mix of critical acclaim and box office powerhouses. Were there

people you knew you wanted just from reading the script, or was it more the result of the casting process?

GE. Ken Watanabe and Bryan Cranston were always in our minds as we were writing the screenplay, but as soon as we finished, we drew up lists of who would be our favorite actor for each character. And to be honest, I was really nervous that they would all say no. Not many people take Godzilla seriously like we wanted to with this film. But we sent out all our materials that included concept art, test animation, a teaser trailer, and the screenplay, and thankfully everybody came back and said yes.

FM. Since GODZILLA is a film that will be FX-driven at times, how was your FX background able to help the process in working with the production teams—as well as the actors staring at giant monsters that weren't actually there?

GE. For me, having done visual effects for a living means the honeymoon was well and truly over. You tend not to get excited about CGI so easily and just use it as a powerful tool for storytelling rather than pure spectacle. However, something that does come in handy is that you become a bit better at judging what is easily done in the computer versus what is easily done on camera. So hopefully you can be more efficient with the sets that you build and the demands you ask of the visual effects companies, so that no one is computer generating things that were much easier to just film, and vice versa.

FAVORITE GODZILLA FILM:

1954's *Gofira*

**FAVORITE MONSTER
GODZILLA BATTLED:**

I have to say the Smog Monster (Hedorah) because the director is a producer on our movie.

**FAVORITE GODZILLA SUIT
DESIGN:**

GODZILLA 2000





THE TOP TEN GODZILLA COLLECTIBLES OF ALL TIME

BY DAVID NORD

When I was first asked to write this article on the top ten Godzilla toys of all time, I thought it was going to be a walk in the park. Boy, was I wrong. I soon came to the realization that I had to choose from 50 years of amazing toys, models, and figures of our favorite radioactive Japanese monster.

It may surprise some people to know that the first Godzilla toy was actually produced here in the US! I refer to the now-iconic Godzilla plastic model kit released by the Aurora Plastics Company in 1964. The world would not see another Godzilla toy until 1966, when the Japanese company Marusan released (only in Japan) their first vinyl figure based on Godzilla in KING KONG VS. GODZILLA. Marusan went on to produce vinyl figures of Godzilla's friends and foes, most of which are highly sought after by Godzilla collectors to this day.

After much deliberation, I decided to consult with my fellow collectors and enthusiasts, as well as do a bit of research in books, magazines, and websites. The criteria that I went by was simple; I chose my favorites based on familiarity to other collectors, personal nostalgia, detail, size, and color.

Honorable mentions, from left to right: Gigabrain gold 1962, M1 GMK, M1 Nakajima, M1 1954 prototype, Pilot Ace 1967 and Minya, and finally Mammit glow-G2000. These figures are a bit obscure and may be unfamiliar to other collectors, but they really appeal to me due to their unapologetic, vibrant colors as well as cool and stylized sculpts.

#10

Bandai Giant Godzilla



The Bandai Giant Godzilla from GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH was released in 1991 and is over 14" tall. This made the list due to the figure's incredible detail and large size. The figure is expertly sculpted, and the addition of the brown painted eyes really makes it sing.

#9

Bullmark Giant Godzilla



Bullmark Giant Godzilla, originally released in 1970, came with a red Tokyo Tower. This figure made the list because it was one of the toys that Ken Yano was playing with on the slide in the film GODZILLA VS. HEDORAH, and I always wished I could own one. The one pictured is my B-Club 2001 reissue.

#8

Bandai's Godzilla 50th Anniversary Box Set



Bandai's Godzilla 50th anniversary box set, released in 2005, was an impressive collection containing a whopping twenty 6" figures and collector cards for each figure.



#7

Deluxe Combat Joe Godzilla

Released by Takara in 1984, this amazingly detailed set included the Combat Joe figure, the actual Godzilla suit that the figure could be posed in, and 2 different heads.

#6

Popy Talking Jumbosaurus

Released in 1978, this big 16" figure sported wheels on both feet and had a shooting fist, but the most unique feature was a cord that when pulled, made him roar! It was the inspiration for the inferior Mattel Godzilla figure made here in the US. [Photo courtesy of Jonathan Birdsey.]



#5

X-Plus 30cm Series Godzilla

A two-for-one, the X-Plus 30cm series Godzilla 1964 and 1962 were released in 2013 and 2012. These figures are so incredibly detailed that it looks like they stepped right out of the movies. They are perfectly sculpted, and the 1964 version also has light-up dorsal plates.



#3

Marusan/Bullmark Vinyl Godzilla

The Marusan/Bullmark vinyl Godzilla is the quintessential Godzilla toy, and the first one produced in Japan. This toy has also been reissued in every color under the sun.

#4

Aurora Godzilla Modeling Kit

The Aurora Godzilla plastic model kit made the list simply because it was the first Godzilla toy ever produced, and one of my personal favorites.



#2

Bandai Monster Series

Great Monster Series 1964 Godzilla, released by Bandai in 1984, is really imposing, beautifully detailed, and huge—measuring over 18" tall! It was reissued on a slightly smaller scale in 1988.



#1

BANDAI THREE-WAY TIE!

Drum roll please... it's a three-way tie: Godzilla 1964, 1984, and 1962 by Bandai. These figures made it to the top spot because they were the first in a long line of detailed, colorful and affordable Godzilla-related toys that Bandai would go on to release in the years to come. These three figures also reignited my passion for the genre in general, and led to me start seriously collecting these amazing toys from the land of the rising *kaiju*!





COUNTDOWN TO EXTINCTION

MAX BROOKS TAKES ON THE APOCALYPSE... AGAIN

BY HOLLY INTERLANDI

Zombies would really be nowhere without Max Brooks: When he first published *THE ZOMBIE SURVIVAL GUIDE* in 2003 (a year that also saw the debut of Robert Kirkman's *WALKING DEAD*), vampires still had their grip on mainstream monsterdom and apocalyptic storylines were not nearly so prevalent. When *WORLD WAR Z* came out in 2006, everything changed. Although the Paramount film version starring Brad Pitt had very little in common with the original novel, it further increased the visibility of the franchise and zombies in general. Since then, Brooks has been involved in all kinds of creative pursuits, his latest being an epic zombie-vampire comic for Avatar called *EXTINCTION PARADE*. We spoke to Brooks recently about horror, zombies, working with Avatar, and Sci-Fi's current obsession with the apocalypse.

Famous Monsters. As a writer who arguably helped to usher in today's "golden age of zombies" with *WORLD WAR Z* and *ZOMBIE SURVIVAL GUIDE*, how do you feel about the zombie presence in cinema, television, and fiction these days? Are you sick of zombies yet?

Max Brooks. Not yet, I'm afraid. As long as they scare me, I'll keep writing about them.

FM. What else scares you? What kinds of horror movies and literature influenced you growing up?

MB. I was always scared to death by horror films. Even to this day, I get a twinge when

watch *JAWS* or *ALIEN* or even some of the old 50s giant monster movies like *THEM!*. Most of my horror-based works are really just trying to deal with the creatures that crept into my childhood nightmares.

FM. What drew you to comics? Are you reading any particular series that made you go "Yes! Comics are the thing!", or does your story dictate your medium?

MB. For me, the story definitely dictates the medium. Some stories come to me in narrative form; some are visual. Comics are the perfect way to balance visual creativity with economic freedom. Unfortunately,

trying to tell those stories in a movie or TV format crashes into the brick wall of money. With comics, you have the ability to tell any story you want, any way you want to.

FM. What has been your experience working with Avatar? What made you go to them with *EXTINCTION PARADE*?

MB. Avatar is the voice of the resistance, pure and simple. Avatar is William Christensen, and William Christensen is the last shoemaker in a world of shoe factories. So many comic book companies have either been bought by Hollywood studios or are



greedily trying to ram their projects into a Hollywood mold. Not *Avatar*. William's not in the pre-movie business, he's in the comic book business, and he genuinely cares about this product. Who wouldn't want to work with a guy like that?

FM. Do you think the "vampires vs. zombies" theme of *EXTINCTION PARADE* is a natural outgrowth of the two monsters becoming so mainstream that there's almost nothing left to say from a human perspective? Would the story work with, for example, werewolves or mummies?

MB. I chose vampires for a very specific reason. I wanted to delve into the notion of privilege, specifically how it can rob someone of a survival mechanism. Vampires are privilege incarnate—not only the French or Russian or even modern aristocracy, but also every 20-something who's never been allowed to fail, never had to overcome adversity, never been forced to adapt, grow, and survive. Emotionally, psychologically, and even culturally, vampires are the perfect metaphor for any of us who've had a soft, easy, arrogant existence, until suddenly, one day...

FM. Fascinating. Why are writers—particularly comic book writers—so obsessed with the apocalypse these days? Do you think it's a reflection of the current state of dwindling resources and/or climate change, or just a good narrative tool?

MB. I think we're just living in really uncertain times. It's the 1970s all over again—a lot of change, and not a lot of it good. People are scared. They perceive the system as breaking down. It's human nature to want to explore this anxiety-ridden road to its end. I think that's why apocalyptic fiction is so popular. For me, someone who is already a nervous wreck and has been thinking about worst case scenarios since I was a kid, I'm just writing what I know best.

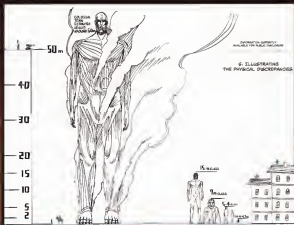


GIANTS AMONG US:
BREAKING DOWN ATTACK ON TITAN

進撃の巨人

THE ANIME SERIES "ATTACK ON TITAN" HAS INSPIRED A MASSIVE FAN BASE
AND A NEW MOVIE IS SET TO RELEASE IN THEATERS

BY HOLLY INTERLANDI



Concept drawings and images from *ATTACK ON TITAN*, clockwise from top left: the different classes of Titan size; an unsettling gaze from a 3-meter class Titan; monster vs. monster in the manga; creator Hajime Isayama drawing at his desk.

The first episode of *ATTACK ON TITAN* is like watching a bomb drop. You land in the middle of the action, watching horseback riders swing themselves into the air to attack a giant in the forest. A small child chides his soldier friends for drinking on the job. A survey team returns ravaged and hopeless. A skinless goliath peers over the top of a concrete wall, and a city descends into chaos. Stones fly from a kick. Soulless behemoths wander through the streets, crushing hundreds. There is so much

death it's difficult to remember that you're watching something *fictional*—something brought to life to be killed.

The pivotal sequence at the end of the episode, of Eren Jaeger's mother being left behind in the rubble of his house and soon devoured, is frighteningly reminiscent of similar scenes in *BAREFOOT GEN* and other classic narratives about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It has the same aura of awful inevitability and helplessness, making Eren's young determination to take revenge on the Titans—giant, humanoid creatures

with an appetite for human flesh—that much more effective and gratifying. After all, you can fight a monster, but you can't take revenge on a bomb.

ATTACK ON TITAN, a fantastically frenetic, unrelenting, and downright pulverizing anime series, began its life in 2009 as a manga drawn and created by the young and unassuming Hajime Isayama. The premise itself is simple: humanity has been nearly wiped out by colossal, marauding creatures known as Titans. The remnants of the human species have



The ATTACK ON TITAN anime has garnered millions of watchers worldwide and has been translated into over a dozen languages. Here, Eren Jaeger battles the Colossal Titan.

built impossibly high walls to keep the Titans out—until a new breed, skullish and creepy and capable of looking over the fifty meter wall, appears out of nowhere and changes the game, which forces the remaining humans to train soldiers in new technology barely capable of overcoming these monsters.

Although criticized for being overly violent, TITAN has infiltrated mainstream consciousness, generating millions (1) of comic book sales and a stateside release of all the existing episodes this year. Its popularity has given rise to spinoffs (ATTACK ON TITAN: BEFORE THE FALL), parodies (ATTACK ON TITAN: JUNIOR HIGH), three OVAs ("original video animation" DVD releases), and a planned live action feature directed by Shinji Higuchi (special effects director of the 90s GAMERA movies) and starring Harume Miura (GOKUSEN). There has been such a demand for the translated volumes in English that manga publisher Kodansha began to release one every month in order to sync up completely with the Japanese version. As of this writing,

the manga is on its twelfth volume, while the anime—debuting in Japan on April 9, 2013 and running for 25 episodes—covers about eight of those volumes. It's a craze reminiscent of NARUTO or ONE PIECE, excepting that TITAN is still a relatively nascent phenomenon—not even the scores of Japanese fans are privy to all of the secrets.

The Titans themselves are drawn very differently in the manga than they are depicted in the anime, although both versions are downright creepy. The anime Titans' terror comes from their scale: shaking the ground with each step, swaying back and forth, staring vacantly into space like lobotomized giants. The manga shows them in cutoff panels, grinning crazily, possessing abnormally proportioned anatomy in the way a child might draw a normal person. The effect is of something distinctly humanoid and yet disconnected—slightly off, like a nightmare or hallucination.

Perhaps their depiction comes from the fact that the story's creator, Hajime Isayama, admits to being shy and socially awkward—

that he isn't afraid of fictional giants, but of real people. In an interview originally printed in *Bessatsu Shonen* magazine—the publication that prints monthly chapters of ATTACK ON TITAN—Isayama admitted that he doesn't find the Titans scary at all, but that "the scariest thing in the world" is "a bunch of middle school girls looking at me and going 'Ewww'." Clearly he has a very socially anxious definition of terror: one that depends more on communication and embarrassment than creatures going bump in the night. Inspiration for the concept itself came from a strange forced encounter with a drunken person at a café, which drove Isayama to think about the impossibility of understanding someone, and how frightening that could be.

There is certainly no understanding the Titans. In the anime series, their origin and nature is relatively unresolved, indicating that the remaining manga volumes (Isayama claims he will end the series at 20) will be mined for a second season, or at least several additional OVAs. The audience knows everything (next to nothing, that is, to begin with) that the characters know,



and only learn tidbits along the way: Titans regurgitate piles of people rather than digesting them; they have no reproductive organs; they can regenerate from any wound except a deep slash on the nape of the neck. There are some, referred to as “variants”, that have an erratic way of moving or acting—sometimes on all fours, like a frog. It is also telling that although

the Titans seem like true monsters at first, along the way we discover things about them that reveal they may be closer to human than anyone thought. It becomes evident that black and white thinking with regard to the Titans can be as dangerous as getting in their way.

What’s interesting is that the full season of the anime, despite being only a partial

run of Isayama’s complete story, feels like a masterpiece of the medium, as if it were made directly for animation. It surely has the roster of masters: director Tetsuo Araki (*DEATH NOTE*), head writer Yasuko Kobayashi (*CLAYMORE*), and designer Kyoji Asano (*PSYCHO-PASS*). It hits all the right high points: exciting music, fantastic weapon design, disturbing



sound effects, and a penchant for intense violence that makes it patently unsuitable for kids. The animation is some of the best you are likely to see outside 3D computer posturizing—it's a flat palate, to be sure, but buzzing with shaky earthquake bass notes, zooming effects, and plain gorgeous event colorization too frenetic to reduce fight scenes to simple stock stills.

The music, composed primarily by Hiroyuki Sawano (BLUE EXORCIST), is a cross-genre conglomeration of fizzing guitars and haunting choir voices. Many of the themes open with pulsating electronic sound effects, as if to warn you of imminent danger before jumping into dramatically orchestrated horn sections. The opening themes, provided by Linked Horizon, give you chills—not only because the melodies are fantastic, but because the montages that accompany them move like sports highlight reels, going from fight to fight and reminding you who to cheer for.

Beyond a few complaints about character designs being based on unsavory figures (designs, people—not personalities), little attention has been paid to the militaristic nature of the story; rather, the narrative and dialogue is rife with contemplations of bravery and moral fortitude, which is quite common in *shonen* (boy's) manga and anime. Most of the inspiring moments come from characters not quite willing to accept their fate as complacently as others. Additionally, the manga in particular draws readers from many different demographics due to its portrayal of non-gendered characters and skill sets shared by men and women, old and young. And the fact that the series creator is essentially channeling



Black and white artwork depicting a pivotal moment in the manga with the use of close-ups and cut-off panels. LOWER LEFT: The three heroes of *ATTACK OF TITAN*, Armin Arlert, Eren Jaeger, and Mikasa Ackerman (we approve of the last name).



his fears and experiences with bullying into a hit fantasy epic is affirming for every nerd who ever wished they could overcome a towering classmate.

There is also some seriously impressive world building with between-chapter diagrams of technology and societal structures, listed as "Information Available for Public Disclosure". It adds a validity to Isayama's world while clarifying the operation of original concepts like 3D maneuvering devices ("performing maneuvers is impossible without a precise technique of bodily weight shifting, making use of a reinforced, full-body belt"), wall cannons ("unlike traditional cannons, these models allow for downward vertical shots"), and ultra-hardened steel ("the only material to date that is able to cut into titan flesh").

Ultimately, however, the popularity of *ATTACK ON TITAN* is easy to pin down: it's just damn good storytelling. The stakes are never the same in every episode; the story switches gears and puts your faith in different things at exactly the right moment. It's never just humans vs. Titans. Just when you might get bored with a single

direction, something new and inspiring happens and the characters adapt to the new problem. The ensemble cast is full of fascinating character studies. It's not only the main character Eren who inspires—you get to view the awesomeness of the whole Scouting Legion; including Eren's adopted sister Mikasa and fan favorite Captain Levi, who are almost superhuman in their abilities.

As the series grows in popularity and the planned film looms, you have to wonder: how will the Titans, monster-effects wise, transfer to a live action setting? That question was readily answered in a Subaru ad that debuted earlier this year—featuring three titans, including the so-named "Colossal Titan"—in the context of intimidating a Subaru that, of course, eludes them (what kind of commercial would it be otherwise?). It turns out that the slated director of the movie Shinji Higuchi did indeed work on the commercial—shooting live actors in makeup and then adding CGI effects for the smaller Titans, and even manipulating a six-foot tall model of the Colossal Titan's head. The result is phenomenal, and should quell any fears of

visual sloppiness. The verdict is still out on whether actors can deliver the believability of 3D maneuvering devices.

Isayama recently made international headlines by revealing that the series' massive popularity has made him rethink the ending for the manga series. Although this has drawn criticism from some circles, you can hardly blame him from reeling somewhat from the international avalanche of attention and second guessing himself. Upcoming volumes of the comic are drawing first print runs upwards of two and a half million—a record for publisher Kodansha. The anime episodes are being re-cut, *GUNDAM*-style, as compiled film versions to be released in movie theatres. Every piece of news on the live action film is being reported enthusiastically around the world. With this kind of attention, it might seem easy to cave under the pressure of so much expectation. But given that Isayama's artistic reaction to social pressure was to envision a series about people overcoming giant monsters, it seems safe to assume that this new pressure will only guide him in unexpected and spectacular directions.





小畑健

KILLING TIME

HIROSHI SAKURAZAKA'S
'ALL YOU NEED IS KILL'

BY HOLLY INTERLANDI

What makes video games less terrifying than their real-life counterparts? A limitless number of lives, of course. Even if you get blown up and have to start back at the beginning, you still get to try again—with a different set of adaptive skills that know what works and what doesn't. It's like seeing your pixelated Mario character go sailing off into the unknown chasm that lurks between bricks and green pipes without breaking a sweat because he'll be back at the beginning in no time with a fresh run and the same theme music.

Well, maybe it's a little different when you *actually* die—repeatedly, and violently. Such is the predicament of the main character in Hiroshi Sakurazaka's **ALL YOU NEED IS KILL**. It's been called a Sci-Fi version of **GROUNDHOG DAY**, but the book—upon which the upcoming film **EDGE OF TOMORROW** is based—actually has very little in common with the famous comedy. It does share the trope of repeating the same day over and over (or in this case, the same day and a half), but the logic, explanation, and eventual result are far more psychologically complex, not to mention deadly. To delve into too many of these differences is to give the game away, but suffice to say that **ALL YOU NEED IS KILL** never attributes its unnatural events to anything less than technology—making it a truly *science fiction* book.

VIZ Media was ahead of the curve on this one. They published an English translation of Sakurazaka's novel back in 2009 as part of their nascent Japanese Sci-Fi imprint, Haikasoru (which has also released a new translation of Koushun Takami's **BATTLE ROYALE**). Now **ALL YOU NEED IS KILL** has become both a popular book and a manga, serialized in *Weekly Shonen Jump* and illustrated by Takeshi Obata of **DEATH NOTE** fame. The manga is very no-holds-barred violent, much like the novel itself, and features character designs by Obata that are in line with the video games Sakurazaka claims to be influenced by.

But as has been proven with Warner Bros.' three million dollar film deal, Sakurazaka's tale of war has hardly been confined to the Japanese sector of geekdom. "We actually started working on the U.S. graphic novel adaptation before there was a commissioned manga," explains Joel Enos, editor of Haikasoru's graphic novel version. "So although we weren't consciously staying away from that style to avoid overlap with the manga, we did shy away from it in general because we really wanted a truly Western style comic. We made the choice to go full-color, left-to-right; and decided to go with an American comic book artist."

That artist was Lee Ferguson, who had

worked for DC and Archaia and submitted character designs that sat well with the editors. Says Enos, "His style is very retro-fifties science fiction, which I love. In the end, he was absolutely the right choice, and his artwork shows a unique spin on Sakurazaka's world." That spin included finding suitable visual counterparts for both aliens and mecha-encased humans ("Jacket Jockeys") that were more than just reruns of other Sci-Fi franchises. "I remember the first time I read through the novel, I was thinking to myself that I had no idea where to go with the creature designs," recalls Ferguson. "But then the first batch of monsters I turned in seemed to get us going in the right direction. I mostly just wanted them to feel like they were of the world we were working in, and yet have some elasticity. As for the Jackets, they needed to be cool, functional, and something that could be drawn over and over for ninety-plus pages. I think I stumbled across something that felt right with Rita, then worked back from there, putting Keiji in what I hoped was a somewhat less unique version of the suit. Hers is meant to stand out from the crowd, while he is, of course, just a grunt."

Although the grunt in Sakurazaka's world is Keiji Kiriya, a Japanese recruit straight out of high school, the **EDGE OF TOMORROW** film features Tom Cruise

in the lead role (although his character's name is a clever wink to the end of the original novel). Cruise's character is also a novice who eventually enlists the aid of soldier extraordinaire Rita Vrataski (played by Emily Blunt)—who, it turns out, has experienced her own brand of repetition. The two eventually figure out the nature of their time loops, and what it means for future battles against the aliens, known as Mimics.

It will be interesting to see how *EDGE OF TOMORROW* interprets the aliens, given that the novel, graphic novel, and manga all have their own spin on the creatures. The book describes them as “bloating frogs”, making no real mention of tentacles. Lee Ferguson's graphic novel depiction is as green asymmetrical blobs with gaping mouths and “feelers” resembling whiskers. Takeshi Obata's manga villains are perhaps the most horrifying—spike-propelled spheres with giant, blocky teeth. Perhaps the Hollywood version will downplay the aliens and give no concrete design at all—which could be appropriate, pending their relative insignificance (thus far) in the film's trailers.

Certainly, fans of alien Sci-Fi stories aren't the only ones clamoring for ALL

“Science fiction for the adrenaline junkie. Reads fast, kicks ass and keeps on coming. Buckle up and enjoy.”

—John Scalzi, author of *Old Man's War* and *The Android's Dream*

ALL YOU NEED IS HIDASHI SAKURAZAKA KILL

HE DIED IN BATTLE. HE WAS REBORN IN VICTORY.

Translated by Alexander D. Smith

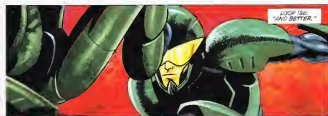
LEFT: Takeshi Obata's manga design for Rita Vrataski.

ABOVE: The cover to Sakurazaka's original novel, with art by Yoshitoshi Abe (*SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN*).

YOU NEED IS KILL. It appears that demographics of all kinds have embraced the story. “One demographic that has eagerly embraced the book in the US is military vets,” reveals Nick Mamatas, editor of the original novel. “Our first Amazon reader review came from a veteran, and that was quite interesting. A lot of people who have been through war really

appreciate the novel.” And with lines like “Food is like war. You have to experience it for yourself,” it's easy to see why. The book is, above all, thrilling, and full of social commentary (“Good ideas don't stand a chance against good bureaucracy”), laugh-out-loud metaphors (“The squad was full of badasses who had been through Hell and back so many times they were on a first name basis with the Devil”), and clever





wartime satire ("I take great pride in the role I play conveying the truths of this war to the public. Of course, 90 percent of the truth is lighting!").

Expect much of that to transfer to the graphic novel, says Mamatas: "Our main emphasis was on keeping the structure intact—the novel has four long chapters, three of which are in the first person, and one of which is in the third. So we moved from following Keiji for the first two chapters to a broader POV to tell the story

of Rita, before swinging back to follow both of them to the climax. We did manage to keep a lot of the fun stuff, including elements of the 'Let's Go Join the Army' song, the eating contest, the isometric push-ups, and Rita's experience with being turned into an action figure."

Such anecdotes make ALL YOU NEED IS KILL rise above its "video game" gimmick. In the Afterword, Sakurazaka describes the feeling of conquering such games: "The ending never changes. The

THIS PAGE: After its success as a novel, **ALL YOU NEED IS KILL** was adapted as a manga, **BELOW**, and will soon become a graphic novel by Nick Mamatas and Lee Ferguson, **LEFT**.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Tom Cruise signed on to star in the English-language live action adaptation. Unfortunately, the book's very awesome name was changed to **EDGE OF TOMORROW**. Cruise insisted on actors wearing mech suits weighing over 100 pounds, in some cases, in order to portray what he felt were accurate representations of the original story's vision.



EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL

Our enemies—the enemies of the United Defense Force—are monsters. Mimics, we call them. My gun was out of bullets.

The silhouette of a misshapen orb materialized in the clay-brown haze. It was shorter than a man. It would probably come up to the shoulder of a Jacketed soldier. If a man were a thin pole standing on end, a Mimic would be a stout barrel—a barrel with four limbs and a tail, at any rate. Something like the bloated corpse of a drowned frog, we liked to say. To hear the lab rats tell it, they have more in common with starfish, but that's just details.

They make for a smaller target than a man, so naturally they're harder to hit. Despite their size, they weigh more than we do. If you took one of those oversized casks, the kind Americans use to distill bourbon, and filled it with wet sand you'd have it about right. Not the kind of mass a mammal that's 70 percent water could ever hope for. A single swipe of one of its limbs can send a man flying in a thousand little pieces. Their javelins, projectiles fired from vents in their bodies, have the power of 40mm shells.

To fight them, we use machines to make ourselves stronger. We climb into mechanized armor Jackets—science's latest and greatest. We bundle ourselves into steel porcupine skin so tough a shotgun fired at point blank wouldn't leave a scratch. That's how we face off against the Mimics, and we're still outclassed.

Mimics don't inspire the instinctive fear you'd expect if you found yourself facing a bear protecting her cubs, or meeting the gaze of a hungry lion. Mimics don't roar.

They're not frightening to look at. They don't spread any wings or stand on their hind legs to make themselves look more intimidating. They simply hunt with the relentlessness of machines. I felt like a deer in the headlights, frozen in the path of an oncoming truck. I couldn't understand how I'd gotten myself into the situation I was in.

I was out of bullets.

So long, Mom.

All You Need Is Kill © 2004 by Hiroshi Sakurazaka. All rights reserved. Original novel first published in Japan in 2004 by Shueisha Inc., Tokyo. Available at your local bookstore, amazon.com, and Barnes & Noble (bn.com).



ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER

AUTHOR SERGEI LUKYANENKO REVISITS HIS
URBAN FANTASY SERIES IN 'NEW WATCH'

BY ED BLAIR

Urban fantasy is one of those genres that leaves a lot of people scratching their heads. To many, fantasy is dragons and swords, not alleyways and skyscrapers. It's also hard to master, as many authors find great difficulty in putting fantasy elements into modern day society. Despite that, Russian author Sergei Lukyanenko has proven to be amongst the best urban fantasy writers, time and again. His series, *NIGHT WATCH*, tells the story of two ancient orders—the Light and the Dark—who fought to a stalemate hundreds of years ago, resulting in an uneasy truce. Today, each group keeps watch over the other, allowing them to engage in often reprehensible activities, as long as those activities don't upset the balance between the Light and Dark. The two Watches are rich with characters like magicians, shapeshifters, werewolves, vampires, warlocks, and more. The primary character is Anton Gorodetsky, a magician of the Light, a member of the Night Watch who patrols the shadows, keeping an eye on the members of the Dark who operate when the sun goes down. In the series' fifth book, *NEW WATCH*, Anton is once again called to action as he encounters a child with the ability to see the future—a power that could put an end to all of mankind.

Famous Monsters. There was a feeling after *FINAL WATCH* that the series had come to a close. Was *NEW WATCH* always part of the plan, or did something happen to make you want to revisit your literary world?

Sergei Lukyanenko. As a reader I always loved finished stories. Certainly, to leave my most popular book series with an "open end" wasn't in my plans. Originally I wanted to finish everything in *LAST WATCH*, but the problem was that I already had a thought as to how the whole story would come to the end: Anton Gorodetsky's daughter Nadia had to play a leading role. But in the book *LAST WATCH*, she was still absolutely a little girl! I understood

that it had to wait while she becomes at least a teenager. And I couldn't make it take place at any time, as the action in each book happens in the year when the book is published. It means that Nadezhda couldn't be fourteen when she was born only seven years ago. Therefore, I had to wait. Then I decided to write two more books: *NEW WATCH* and another which I am working on now, *THE SIXTH WATCH*.

However, it is not yet the end of "Watch." Now in Russia, we have books branching from the main plot. Three of them are written by me together with other authors, and there are more under my control but without direct participation in the text. What makes these books different from the main series? They are about the

world of "Watch," but with other heroes, in other historical eras and other countries. They show the antagonism of Night and Day Watch in a snow-covered Siberian taiga and hot Asian steppes, about events occurring in the magic world during the Napoleonic wars and the Caribbean Crisis, about the Watch at the time of the Soviet Union or in the Wild West of the USA.

FM. The series draws a lot of ideas from classic horror and mythology. Growing up, what types of literature and movies influenced your creative development as a writer?

SL. I write in very different genres and styles—"Watch" is only one of the directions. I was affected by the Soviet

writers as fantasists, and the Americans Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Stephen King, and Howard Phillips Lovecraft. Besides fantasy, since early childhood I've read a lot of classic literature. I adored Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo. The Russian writer Nikolay Gogol is a magnificent master of both comedy and the literature of horrors. Mikhail Bulgakov is a writer responsible for the genre called "city fantasy."

The cinema is, of course, both the main competitor and the main ally of literature. I pay tribute to Hollywood, and I love the French cinema and, certainly, Russian—though now has not been the best times. My favorite directors are Tim Burton and Matthew Vaughn. My favorite actor is Johnny Depp. My favorite actress is Audrey Hepburn.

The release of the movies *NIGHT WATCH* and *DAY WATCH* brought Russian cinema out of a coma. I hope that I will manage to participate in other movies, which will do well for our cinema.

FM. How did the idea for the *NIGHT WATCH* series come to be? What were

some of the foundational ideas that the world of the *Twilight* has been built upon? **SL.** The main idea when I thought out the world of "Watch" was: can there be wizards, werewolves, and vampires in our world? Why does nobody know about them? The answer arose by itself—what if there is a "magic police" that watches so wizards "don't stand out"? Also, there is a space (Twilight) where they have their duels. It was the logical justification necessary for me to believe in this world. Then I began to reflect on how the *Twilight* interacts with Others and ordinary people. But everything began from a desire to "hide" the magic world from the usual. I think that J.K. Rowling had approximately the same thoughts when she thought out a platform 9¾ at the station King's Cross (in *HARRY POTTER*). The Writer always faces a task to convince himself and the reader of truthfulness.

FM. One of the unique aspects of the series is that good isn't necessarily trying to defeat evil, but simply balance it. Is it part of the core of the *NIGHT WATCH* world, that in order for the world to work both

good and evil need to exist? **SL.** The idea of the dualism of good and evil—their antagonism and, at the same time, interrelation—is not my invention. It is the idea of eastern doctrines and philosophies, and it was expressed in a fantasy by the well-known Ursula Le Guin. But in "Watch," it's all a little bit different. The Dark aren't unambiguously angry, and the Light aren't unambiguously kind. The division is slightly more difficult. The Dark are egoists who first of all wish the benefit for themselves. The Light are altruists, wishing to make the whole world happy. But as we know from history, sometimes egoists do good deeds for personal comfort, and altruists, on the contrary, for the sake of general good, spill rivers of blood. So the main idea is an antagonism and balance not of good and evil; but egotism and altruism.

FM. While the series introduces readers to many characters, Anton seems to be the one carrying much of the weight on his shoulders. For a character that has experienced so many highs and lows and so much loss, what is it that keeps Anton moving forward? His missions often seem



thankless and most people will never know what he did. Yet he continues on, trying to be a family man and save the world at the same time.

SL: It is always seductive to make the hero the "Chosen One". It explains why all the cones fall on Harry Potter's head, or all the action turns round Anakin Skywalker. And Anton partly goes on this way—everything becomes stronger and stronger; he participates in more and more important events, and saves the world. But what makes Anton Gorodetsky interesting and different is that he tries to remain a person. Almost all Others around him have already stopped being people. They can think of people with kindness or hostility, can protect or use them. But they've already accepted the difference. They are Others. Anton Gorodetsky, even having become the Highest magician, persistently tries to remain a person. And it will probably rescue him in the sixth book. Or it will ruin him—I don't know yet.

FM: Many of us discovered the books after the movie was released in the U.S. because that was when the books became more available. What were your feelings about the two movies that were adapted from NIGHT WATCH and DAY WATCH and their portrayal of your world?

SL: I am very grateful to Timur Bekmambetov, who directed these movies, and to everyone who worked on them. But certainly, these movies are very far from the books. I am grateful to them for the magnificent advertising of which a writer only can dream—thanks to the movies, my books are in thirty countries, and their circulation is in the millions of copies. But they are very far from the plot of the books. As of now, the rights for the screen version of "Watch" have expired, and the rights returned to me. I very much count on another screen version in a bigger measure—a TV series, as the books have a lot of a material, and no film version will be able to contain everything written.

But, time will tell. Now I'm finishing work on the TV series scenario, and on an absolutely new book for a movie company whose name I very much would like to tell, but I can't under the terms of the contract.

NEW WATCH is available at amazon.com.



AND OUT COME THE WOLVES

AUTHOR ERIC RED FUSES GUNSLINGERS, WEREWOLVES, AND THE WILD WEST IN HIS LATEST ACTION/HORROR NOVEL

BY ED BLAIN

Imagine *THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN* mixed with *DOG SOLDIERS* and you've got Eric Red's *WOLVES OF SANTA SANGRE*. Red's previous books and screenplays, including 1986's classic *THE HITCHER*, are full of classic horror moments, non-stop action, and characters pushed to the edge. *WOLVES* is no different, as three outlaws are hired by a young woman to protect her village from what she claims is a pack of werewolves. Seeing it as an easy job for three gunslingers looking to make some quick coin, they begin a journey that will forever change the way they see the world. Filled with action set pieces and terrifying monsters that are ready-made for a big screen adaptation, *WOLVES* is a fun and exciting read that no horror fan should miss. Red recently took some time to talk about it with FM.

Famous Monsters. Given that you've written quite a bit from the horror/slasher/supernatural perspective, what kinds of monster films, literature, TV shows, and artists/writers/directors were you most influenced by growing up?

Eric Red. It started when my mother and grandmother took me to see *PSYCHO* when I was nine years old, and it scared me so badly I ran screaming up the aisle—literally. As a kid, I loved monster movies on a purely visceral level. I saw a lot of films with my father, who loved movies and was very supportive of my aspirations in that regard—although he urged me towards more elevated flicks, like the time I had him take me to *THE INCREDIBLE TWO-HEADED TRANSPLANT* and got so grossed out we left the theater, so he took me right over to New Jersey to see *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*. My dad was a metallurgical engineer and photographer, and I get my brain and technical aptitude from him. My horror fan tastes and pursuits as a kid were probably not that different from many other young horror fans. I made Super 8 monster movies with my friends and stop motion creature films, spending entire weekends locked in my room

moving clay monsters frame by frame. Got ambitious, too, using rear projection and front projection techniques by the time I was twelve. I read Lovecraft, Poe, and Matheson and began writing short stories and novellas myself.

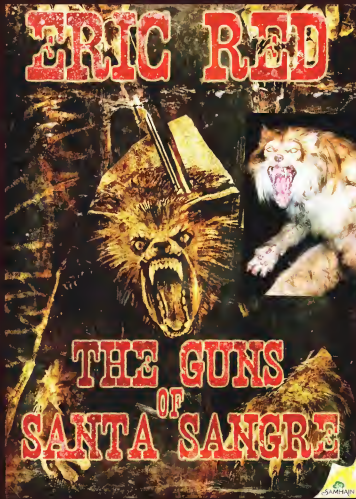
Hitchcock said there is an intrinsic worth in pure shock value because it takes us out of our head and makes us *feel*. This is why I love exploitation films—because they engage on a gut entertainment level. I regard all of my films and books as high-end exploitation. Most of the best horror and science fiction films are essentially exploitation movies with a B movie story at the core: a basic confrontation with a group of people trapped in an isolated setting against a monster. It's the execution that elevates it.

FM. Before we jump into the new book, tell us a little about how you started out in the business and got your break with *THE HITCHER*.

ER. *THE HITCHER* was my first script. Sold it while I was living in Austin, Texas. It was the early 80s and I didn't know anyone in Hollywood or have an agent or any of that. I mailed out a teaser letter to

producers whose names I recognized in Los Angeles, daring them to read the script. One of the producers I sent a letter to was Phil Feldman at Fox, who produced *THE WILD BUNCH*. The studio actually delivered the letter to producer Ed Feldman—the wrong Feldman—instead, Ed had a smart young development executive named David Bombyk, who read my letter and wrote back, "Normally we have a policy against unsolicited material, but you've piqued my interest. Send the script." Feldman bought it six months later, after I had moved to L.A. Bombyk used to joke that his first story conferences with me were from a gas station pay phone in Texas, punctuated by the sound of the quarters I kept slugging in during the call.

After that, I did *NEAR DARK*, which has also stood the test of time. Because I wanted to direct, I wrote COHEN AND TATE on spec and made the sale of the script conditional on my helming it. A company gave me a shot, and I directed my first feature with a major star (Roy Scheider). I went from that film to writing and directing my first studio film, *BODY PARTS*, at Paramount. That was a very busy few years. Since then, I've written and/



or directed *BAD MOON*, *BLUE STEEL*, *THE LAST OUTLAW*, and *UNDERTOW*. My latest is *100 FEET*, a scary ghost film I wrote and directed, with Famke Janssen and Bobby Cannavale. Recently I began writing fiction as well as screenplays, and I have four novels and numerous published short stories. Book writing has become a second career, besides making movies.

FM. Your newest book, *GUNS OF SANTA SANGRE*, is published by Samhain, a publisher that prides itself on giving their writers a lot of room to work. How did you get hooked up with them and how has your experience been with them?

ER. I knew Don D'Auria, editor of

Samhain's horror line, from when he was editor at Dorchester books. When I heard Don had moved over to Samhain, I submitted *THE GUNS OF SANTA SANGRE* to him, but didn't hear back, so I forgot about it. In the interim, my first novel *DON'T STAND SO CLOSE* was published in hardcover and paperback by SST Publications, a fine UK house. That novel is a provocative teen thriller about a high school student seduced into an affair with his English teacher, who turns out to be psychopathic serial sexual predator—a nightmare “watch out what you wish for” scenario. The book generated some buzz when it was published, and a few weeks after it came out, Don D'Auria contacted

me, saying Samhain was going to publish *THE GUNS OF SANTA SANGRE*. I was thrilled and surprised, since I never thought I'd sell a western novel—with or without werewolves—in the current publishing environment.

Don is a seasoned editor, and both he and Samhain are conscientious and supportive in respecting the author's vision. They didn't censor a word of the considerable gore in *THE GUNS OF SANTA SANGRE*, which had to be there because people who want to read a werewolf western expect a bloody read. Also, the period setting required graphic violence to contemporize the world of the old west in a relatable way for readers. Don had valuable editorial input that resulted in a better novel. He wanted the book to be longer. Since I couldn't add to the main story without padding

it, I wrote a subplot that supercharged the horror action and made the story a more sweeping canvas.

Samhain seems to me to be everything an author could ask for in a horror publisher. They do a damn fine job manufacturing handsome editions of their books and have an excellent distribution department as far as promotion and marketing and getting major reviews. It's been a happy enough experience with Samhain that I've now done three books for them—my next novel, *IT WAITS BELOW*, comes out this summer. The book after that will be published early next year—it's a return to *HITCHER* territory and is the scariest thing I've ever written.

FM. As a writer and director, you've tackled werewolves (*BAD MOON*) and westerns (*THE LAST OUTLAW*), but in *GUNS OF SANTA SANGRE*, you decided to pair the two. Where did the idea for the book originate?

ER. One day, I was thinking about a western shoot-out with gunfighters using sixers loaded with silver bullets in a bloody showdown against wolfmen. A werewolf western seemed like an awesome idea, and something I hadn't seen before. The title, *THE GUNS OF SANTA SANGRE* actually came to me first and kept running around my head—for a year it was a title

in search of a story. Once I figured out the setup—three gunfighters being offered all the silver in a church after they kill the werewolves who have taken the place over—I had the hook, and the story all fell into place. It was first written as a 10,000 word short story, but ideas kept coming, and it soon became a novel.

I'm always trying to break new ground, and a werewolf western offered opportunities for off-the-chain action that hadn't been done before. The first chapter opens with a werewolf attack on a runaway stagecoach as a houny hunter shoots it out with the creatures bringing down the team of horses, and escalates from there. But the story never loses sight of its characters—three tough outlaws named Tucker, Bodie, and Fix recruited by Pilar, a Mexican peasant woman disguised as a man, to rescue her village from lycanthropes. The woman has faith in the tarnished men, even when they haven't earned it, and we spend time getting to know them and becoming involved with their personal conflicts on their journey to becoming heroes.

FM. The book seems to almost draw more from western cinema than literature. Was it a conscious decision to give the book a more cinematic feel with action set-pieces and a very visual style, or is that just a natural byproduct of your film background?

ER. From working in movies, I think visually in terms of telling stories with pictures, but I think a lot of western literature is cinematic. You can't get away from it. Western films and literature cross-pollinate each other. Our perception of the mythology of the American west is inextricably rooted in movies as well as books. When we think western, we automatically picture epic tableaux of rugged landscape, tall cowboys with big hats and six guns facing off in a showdown, horses and riders galloping across the horizon into the sunset. That comes from movies, but pretty much all those elements are in the average western novel as well. Which is to say I don't think in writing a western you can avoid certain cinematic elements, and most western books I've read have filmic aspects. These include my personal four favorite western novels, *THE SHOOTIST*, *THE COWBOY AND THE COSSACK*, *THE SEARCHERS*, and *BLOOD MERIDIAN*.

FM. What about the werewolves? While

they do have familiar elements to them because there is so much established lore, it felt like you were putting some new spins on the design, behavior, and mythology of the beasts. Were you trying to bring some original elements in?

ER. I wanted to bring my werewolves back to the traditional horrific monster mold. Werewolves have been declawed in current popular culture—the whole “is the cute chick going to end up with the cute werewolf or cute vampire” thing. Werewolves are monsters, man. You're scared of them because they will eat you and your kids, and if you get bit you will turn into one and you will eat your kids. If you see a werewolf, don't fall in love with it; shoot it with a silver bullet.

Some original elements with the werewolves in my novel were just logical. Werewolves eat people, so in the book when the wolf men get killed and revert to human form, other werewolves devour them, cannibalistically eating their own. And I had to go a different way with the origins of the wolf men, since the standard Romanian Gypsy curse would be goofy in a western setting. Instead, the fable-like backstory of my werewolves was inspired by the Mexican folklore of the moon being a trickster.

Werewolves are rich characters to write because you get two bites at the apple, bad guy-wise—first as wolf men, then in human form. My gang of Mexican bandits love being werewolves—they enjoy the raw power of being the most dangerous things around who can take what they want and whomever they want whenever they want to. I saw my bandits as being like contemporary South American drug dealers—ruthless, bloodthirsty, and capable of unspeakable violence. The stuff the bad guys do in the novel, like beheading people and sticking their heads on posts, is going on in Mexican drug cartels today. My werewolves represent the absence of humanity, and the gunfighters reaffirm their humanity by challenging them.

FM. The world of *GUNS OF SANTA SANGRE* is rich and, if there's a mythology that exists, nothing says there can't be more monsters. Any chance we'll revisit the characters or even new characters in a different part of this world?

ER. You bet. Tucker, Bodie, and Fix can saddle up again to kick some more monster butt, if readers want a sequel. Now that you

mention it, the werewolves might be itchin' for some payback...

FM. Your next hook I've read is a Sci-Fi novel published through Samhain. What can you tell us about *IT WAITS BELOW*?

ER. It's a science fiction monster novel and sea adventure story both above and below the ocean. *IT WAITS BELOW* is a throwback to the monster movies I grew up with. The novel starts in the 1800s, when an asteroid carrying an extraterrestrial life form crashes into the Pacific. Two hundred years later, a deep sea salvage crew encounters the space creature, and the fun begins.

FM. Any current film or TV projects that you can slip a few details out on, or is everything still under wraps?

ER. I'm preparing to direct a film called *NO MAN'S RIDGE* about a group of extreme hunters who go on a hunt for Bigfoot in Wyoming, with terrifying results. It's the ultimate Bigfoot movie.

This interview with *Famous Monsters* means a lot to me, because FM was my favorite magazine as a kid, and the chills I got from the pages of monster movie pictorials were inspirations that got me into the horror field. This is like coming full circle, so thank you for that!

THE GUNS OF SANTA SANGRE is available at amazon.com.

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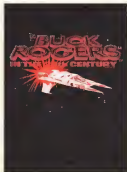
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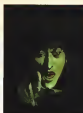
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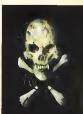
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—Ultimate Warrior (1959-2014)



NEXT ISSUE:

We mark 30 years of GHOSTBUSTERS with interviews, reflections, giant Twinkies... well, maybe you'll have to go to the store for the Twinkies, but you'll find everything else in FM 275. Meanwhile, let the upcoming DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES movie take you back to the original series of films, which continue to influence science fiction filmmaking today. Also, we speak to film poster legend Drew Struzan, FX expert Dave Elsey, FRIDAY THE 13TH composer Harry Manfredini, and many more. Featuring GHOSTBUSTERS newsstand cover by Terry Wolfinger and PLANET OF THE APES subscriber cover by Jason Edmiston!

CORRECTION: In FM 273, we misidentified the actors in the photo on Page 14 as Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi. It is in fact a photograph of Karloff and Otto Lederer. FM regrets the error.

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